



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program General Policy A-01

Legislative Requirements for Staff Qualifications in State-Funded Programs

☒ OEC Early Start CT

☒ OEC Smart Start

This policy is effective on July 1, 2025, under the authority granted to the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) from Public Act 24-78. This General Policy A-01 (GP) outlines the Designated Qualified Staff Member (DQSM) requirements and the options staff have to achieve DQSM status.

This GP provides guidance on how to implement the [legislation](#)¹ regarding education qualifications for individual programs receiving state funding noted above. This legislation and GP do NOT apply to programs receiving only Care4Kids subsidy payments (or programs that do not receive any OEC funding).

Beginning on July 1, 2025 all state funded child care programs must meet these statutorily required staff education qualifications. These requirements are informed by the Power to the Profession Task Force's [Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession](#), which was adopted by the [Blue Ribbon Panel](#). The following represents the salient adopted findings:

- **Programs receiving state funding:** Each classroom serving any combination of infants through preschoolers must have a Designated Qualified Staff Member (DQSM) irrespective of individual classroom funding.
- **Child care centers, group homes or license exempt programs:** The DQSM is the person assigned the primary responsibility for a classroom of children (e.g., role as Teacher) and must be present in the assigned classroom at least 60% of the classroom's operating hours.
- **Licensed family child care homes:** The DQSM is the licensed owner.

DQSM Qualifications, Tracking and Reporting Detail

1. The OEC uses the [Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Registry](#) to automatically calculate Qualified Staff Member (QSM) eligibility and track and monitor DQSM compliance.
 - a. [Per GP A-03](#): Part-time and full-time teaching and administrative staff members of OEC-funded programs are required to hold active Registry accounts with earned credits and degrees on file. There must be at least one administrative

¹ Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10-16p is amended by [Public Act 24-78](#). The following document summarizes the legislation.

- access user accessing the program's Registry tools.
- b. All education documentation must be on file and verified in the [Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Registry](#).
 - Degrees and credits must be obtained from a regionally accredited higher education institution;
 - CDA Credentials must be current (not expired) and issued by the Council for Professional Recognition; and
 - Teaching certifications must be current (not expired) and issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE).
 - c. The program's administrative access user must enter the following information in the Registry so that DQSM compliance can be monitored and tracked:
 - Confirm employment of staff
 - Create the program's classrooms
 - Assign staff to roles and classrooms
 - Assign one QSM eligible Teacher as DQSM per classroom serving any combination of infants through preschoolers
 - Monthly, update the Staff Confirmation page which includes completing all fields with current data (including, for example, salaries and information sought regarding those employees actively matriculating toward a degree in early childhood education).
 - d. The Registry automatically calculates QSM status as follows:
 - **Individual QSM** eligibility is calculated for every OEC Registry account holder, shown on the user's *Education and Training Report AND Registry membership card*. For administrative access users, it is also listed in the program's *Staff Qualifications Detail Report*.
 - **Program DQSM compliance** is automatically calculated in the OEC Registry, shown in the *Designated QSM Compliance Report for State Funded Programs* (extra detail) and the *Designated QSM Summary Report for State Funded Programs* (short form), accessible by authorized administrative access users.
2. Licensed Family Child Care Home provision:
- a. Starting July 1, 2025, the DQSM for a licensed family child care home must hold an associate degree or higher in early childhood OR
 - be working toward an associate degree or higher in early childhood education; AND
 - be supervised by someone who holds a bachelor degree and meets the DQSM requirements (see the glossary definition of "Off-site DQSM Supervisor").
 - b. The DQSM must be the licensed family owner.
 - c. Licensed family child care homes are eligible to receive state funds while the owner pursues the degree pathway requirement (i.e., meets the minimum number of credits per year). By June 30, 2035, to enjoy continued eligibility, the owner must hold, at a minimum, an associate's degree in early childhood education.
3. Smart Start provision:
- a. Each classroom with children enrolled through Smart Start must be instructed by an individual who is an employee of the local board of education and holds certification pursuant to C.G.S. Sec. 10-145b, with a CSDE endorsement in early childhood education or early childhood special education. Individuals holding 112 or 113 or 065 teacher certifications are required for classrooms in which a child's Individual Education Program (IEP) requires special education instruction.

PA 24-78 Program Compliance Benchmarks and Detail

The following table is for **licensed child care centers, group child care homes, and license exempt programs**.

The table shows the program requirement of 60% or more DQSMs meeting a qualifying degree requirement by July 1, 2030, with two phase-in benchmarks.

- As an example, if a funded program has three classrooms serving infants through preschoolers, 60% (or two of the three classrooms) must have a DQSM meeting the bachelor's degree options by July 1, 2030 (regardless of how many of the classrooms are state funded).


Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Child Care Homes, and License Exempt Programs		
A	B	C
Requirement: 25% of DQSMs meet a bachelor's degree option / supervised option	Requirement: 50% or more DQSMs meet a bachelor's degree option / supervised option	Requirement: 60% or more DQSMs meet a bachelor's degree option / supervised option
July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2027	July 1, 2027 to June 30, 2030	July 1, 2030 on
Options for meeting percentages above: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have a bachelor's degree or higher in ECE2. Have a bachelor's degree or higher in any field plus CSDE ECE teacher certification3. Have a bachelor's degree or higher in any field PLUS OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational ECE credits4. Accepted until June 30, 2030: Have a bachelor's degree or higher in any field PLUS ANY 12 ECE credits5. Have a bachelor's degree grandfathered status6. Are actively working toward a bachelor's degree in early childhood education with a current plan of study and achieving at least 9 credits per academic year.7. Are supervised by an on-site individual meeting a bachelor's degree option (1-5) detailed above, AND have:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Associate degree in early childhood education ORb. Associate degree in any field plus the OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational early childhood education credits ORc. Accepted until June 30, 2030: hold an associate degree in any field PLUS ANY 12 early childhood credits.8. Are supervised by an on-site individual meeting a bachelor's degree option detailed above (1-5), AND:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Actively working toward an associate degree or higher in early childhood education with a current plan of study and showing progress of at least 9 credits per academic year. <p>All remaining DQSMs must have at minimum a current CDA Credential.</p>		

Note: Definitions for "On-site DQSM Supervisor" and "Off-site DQSM Supervisor" can be found in the Glossary on page 9.

Are you QSM Eligible? Find out in 3 Steps:

1. Find your applicable education qualification details below in the chart for either center, group or license-exempt programs or family child care homes.
2. Make sure all of your educational records are included in your free [OEC Registry](#) account.
3. Check your OEC Registry membership card for your QSM Eligibility.

Use this chart if you work in a **licensed child care center, group home, or a license exempt program**. Licensed family child care home owners should refer to the next chart below. Note that the academic year referenced below includes summer term.

	My early childhood education qualification is:	Am I eligible?	Steps to Meet QSM	Next Steps
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelor's degree or higher in early childhood education	YES!	You meet the requirement!	Take advantage of quality professional development to keep your skills sharp and stay current with the latest ECE research and best practices.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelor's degree or higher in any field PLUS Connecticut State Department of Education early childhood certification	YES!	You meet the requirement!	
<input type="checkbox"/>	On June 30, 2015: held a bachelor's degree or higher in any field plus any 12 early childhood credits and had confirmed employment in an ECE program in the OEC Registry, and were grandfathered as meeting requirements.	YES!	You meet the requirement!	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelor's degree or higher in any field PLUS the OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational early childhood credits	YES!	You meet the requirement!	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accepted until July 1, 2030: Bachelor's degree or higher in any field AND have ANY 12 early childhood credits	YES!	You meet the requirement!	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supervised by an individual meeting a bachelor's degree option detailed above, AND: 1. Associate degree in early childhood education OR 2. Associate degree in any field plus the OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational early childhood education credits OR 3. Accepted until July 1, 2030: Associate degree or higher in any field PLUS ANY 12 early childhood credits	Yes, but...	You must remain supervised by an on-site individual meeting a bachelor's degree requirement. You must successfully complete at least 9 credits in your plan of study per academic year to be considered meeting the requirement.	Apply for OEC Scholarship toward your ECE bachelor's degree!
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supervised by an on-site individual meeting a bachelor's degree option detailed above, AND:	Yes, but...	You must remain supervised by an on-site individual meeting a	Keep your Registry account updated at least annually with an updated

	Actively working toward my associate degree in early childhood education with a current plan of study and showing progress of at least 9 credits per academic year.		bachelor's degree requirement. You must successfully complete at least 9 credits in your plan of study per academic year to be considered meeting the requirement.	plan of study and current transcripts. Use scholarship to continue your degree work, and consider moving into a bachelor's degree plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Current CDA Credential from the Council for Professional Recognition	Not yet	You must be supervised by an on-site individual, and successfully complete at least 9 credits in your plan of study per academic year to get on the pathway to QSM.	Keep your Registry account updated at least annually with an updated plan of study and current transcripts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	No college credit OR not taking 9 credits per academic year in an early childhood education degree plan of study.	Not yet	You must be supervised by an on-site individual, and successfully complete at least 9 credits in your plan of study per academic year to get on the pathway to DQSM.	Use scholarship toward credit and degree work.

Use this chart if you are the **owner of a licensed family child care home**:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	My early childhood education qualification is:	Am I eligible?	Steps to Meet QSM	Next Steps
<input type="checkbox"/>	Associate degree or higher in early childhood education.	YES!	You meet the requirement!	Take advantage of quality professional development to keep your skills sharp and stay up to date with the latest ECE research and best practices
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supervised by an off-site individual meeting a bachelor's degree option per the definition of Off-site DQSM Supervisor in the glossary below AND: 1. Associate degree in any field plus the OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational early childhood education credits OR 2. Accepted until July 1, 2030: Associate degree or higher in	Yes, but...	You must remain supervised by an individual meeting a bachelor's degree requirement (see Glossary for Off-Site DQSM Supervisor).	Apply for OEC Scholarship toward your ECE bachelor's degree!

	any field PLUS ANY 12 early childhood credits			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supervised by an individual who meets the bachelor's-level requirements: AND Actively working toward my associate degree or higher in early childhood education with a current plan of study and showing progress toward a goal date of no later than June 30, 2035.	Yes, but...	You must remain supervised by an individual meeting a bachelor's degree option (see Glossary for Off-Site DQSM Supervisor) AND: Successfully complete at least 3 credits in your plan of study per academic year to be considered meeting the requirement.	Apply for OEC Scholarship toward your ECE degree! Keep your Registry account updated at least annually with an updated plan of study and current transcripts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Current CDA Credential from the Council for Professional Recognition; OR Some or no college credit OR OR not taking 3 credits per academic year in an early childhood education degree plan of study.	Not yet	You must be supervised by an individual meeting a bachelor's degree option (see Glossary for Off-Site DQSM Supervisor) AND: Pursue an associate degree or higher by completing at least 3 credits in your plan of study per academic year to get on the pathway to QSM.	Apply for OEC Scholarship toward your ECE degree! Keep your Registry account updated at least annually with an updated plan of study and current transcripts.

For Staff Not Currently meeting a Qualifying Degree Option

The OEC supports degree attainment and progression by providing scholarship for ECE degrees and 12 ECE credits. OEC resources can advance career pathways for staff as they move from a CDA credential to a degree; from an associate degree to a bachelor's degree.

- If you (or a staff member) are currently working in a planned program of study toward a CDA credential or degree in early childhood: continue to use OEC scholarship via your Registry account to cover all expenses. OEC offers debt-free opportunities- no student loans for your entire degree.
- If you (or a staff member) have a bachelor's degree or higher in a non-Early Childhood Education: The OEC wants to support these staff so they do not spend time or resources getting an entry-level CDA credential (that must be renewed every 3 years) or a second degree. We have pathways to add ECE knowledge and practice to your bachelor's degree. Consult with a Registry Advisor for information on how to plan your next steps.
- If you (or a staff member) have not yet attained any college credit, or have achieved a CDA, the OEC can assist you in pursuing a degree pathway to achieve DQSM status. Consult with a Registry Advisor for information on how to plan your next steps.

Programs should actively support staff to achieve QSM requirements: please see the OEC's [Interim Guidance \(Spanish version\)](#) for more details.

Glossary of Terms for GP A-01

This glossary reflects the terms used in GP A-01 for state funded programs.

Administrative Staff	Those individuals responsible for “planning, implementing and evaluating” a program for young children; “the role of the administrator covers both leadership and management functions” (NAEYC). This may include, but is not limited to, the following administrative team members: executive director, director, program administrator, assistant director, principal, curriculum coordinator, education coordinator, site manager.
Classroom	A “classroom” is considered a group of children not to exceed the recommended group sizes outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Federal Head Start, and the OEC Family Home, Child Care Center and Group Child Care Home Licensing Regulations. OEC licensed programs are required to meet child care licensing requirements for ratio and group size. In addition, there must be one DQSM (DQSM) per classroom or group.
Designated Qualified Staff Member (DQSM)	<p>Designation given by the program’s administrative access Registry user to the one individual per classroom that meets the definition of both Teacher and QSM education requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This person must be identified in the Registry. The Registry auto-calculates eligible QSMs. Only eligible QSMs assigned to a specific room are made available to be chosen in the Registry in the drop down menu for that room/group. <p>State-funded programs must maintain a schedule for all classrooms at each site that consistently provides for the same Teacher as DQSM to be present in the same classroom for a minimum of 60% of the classroom’s operating hours each day.</p>
Family Child Care Owner	The owner of a family child care home under C.G.S. Sec. 19a-77 is the individual who must be the DQSM in the licensed home. Substitutes and Assistants may not be designated for this role.
Grandfathered Qualified Staff Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individual, regardless of role, who held a bachelor’s degree or higher in any field AND had 12 or more early childhood credits AND who was employed in a state-funded program as verified in the Registry on June 30, 2015 was grandfathered as meeting the qualifying bachelor's degree. Grandfathering is noted in the Registry on the individual’s profile, membership card, and Education and Training Report, as well as on the program’s Staff Qualifications Detail Report.
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NAFCC	National Association for Family Child Care
OEC Approved CSDE Teacher Certification Endorsements	<p>Below is the list of the CSDE’s teacher certifications with early childhood endorsements, in accordance with C.G.S. Sec. 10-145b, that are accepted as meeting the state-funded staff requirement. The certification must be current, not expired. Note: If the certification is an elementary certification, the program of study must include 12 ECE credits. Teachers must upload transcripts in addition to CSDE teacher certification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 113 Integrated Early Childhood/Special Ed., N/K through Grade 3 112 Integrated Early Childhood/Special Ed., Birth – K 512 CT Montessori, Primary, Birth - K (only valid in Montessori settings) 001 PreK – Grade 8 002 PreK – Grade 6 003 PreK – Grade 3

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 008 PreK – K • 065 Comprehensive Special Education PreK – Grade 12 • 165 Special Education: Comprehensive, Grades K through 12 (as of 7/1/23 includes PreK)
On-site DQSM Supervisor	<p>An on-site supervisor of a DQSM teacher is a teacher or administrator who works in the same location as the classroom of the DQSM. They must work there during the majority of hours the classroom is operating.</p> <p>The supervisor’s role is to mentor, coach, and guide the teacher on all of their roles defined under “Teacher” below. To qualify, supervisors must have one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A bachelor’s degree or higher in ECE 2. A bachelor’s degree or higher in any field plus CSDE ECE teacher certification 3. A bachelor’s degree or higher in any field plus ANY 12 ECE credits (this option for DQSM will be accepted until 06-30-2030) 4. A bachelor’s degree or higher in any field PLUS OEC’s 12 DEFINED foundational ECE credits 5. A bachelor’s degree grandfathered status
Off-site Family Child Care DQSM Supervisor	<p>For licensed family child care homes, the owner also serves as the lead teacher and DQSM by regulation. Supervision by an “off-site” supervisor means coaching, advising, mentorship, and support for the DQSM where the person supervising comes <u>to</u> the family child care home, but does not work at the family child care home.</p> <p>To qualify, off-site family child care DQSM supervisors must have one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A bachelor’s degree or higher in ECE 2. A bachelor’s degree or higher in any field plus CSDE ECE teacher certification 3. A bachelor’s degree or higher in any field PLUS OEC’s 12 DEFINED foundational ECE credits 4. Until June 30, 2030: A bachelor’s degree or higher in any field and any 12 ECE credits. 5. A bachelor’s degree grandfathered status
Plan of Study	<p>Can also be referred to as a Degree Evaluation or Advising Worksheet, refers to a document from your college or university that outlines the classes that must be completed in order to graduate in your planned Early Childhood Education.</p> <p>The document should contain what classes a student has successfully completed so far and what term is planned for future courses. Plan of study must be updated at least each academic year or whenever any changes are made, if more often.</p>
Registry	<p>The Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Registry at https://oecregistry.org</p> <p>Use the Registry tools to monitor QSM compliance.</p> <p>Funded programs must refer to GP A-03 for additional Registry use requirements.</p>
Regionally Accredited Higher Education Institution	<p>The OEC recognizes credits and degrees from regionally accredited colleges and universities consistent with the CT State Department of Education and Office of Higher Education.</p> <p>The goal of higher education institution accreditation is to ensure that the education provided meets acceptable levels of quality. Accreditation determines a school's eligibility for participation in federal (Title IV) and state financial aid programs. Proper accreditation is also important for the acceptance and transfers of college credit, and is a prerequisite for many graduate programs.</p>

	For more information about regional accreditation, go to https://oecregistry.org/index.cfm?module=whatIsCollegeAccreditation&navID=nav37
Teacher	A Teacher is an individual with primary responsibility for a classroom of children for any settings serving young children birth. They apply child development theories and knowledge across various domains, while demonstrating a commitment to professional learning and ethical practices. Their responsibilities include but are not limited to developing and sustaining high-quality development and learning experiences, supporting the development of teacher aides and substitutes, documenting children's progress, collaborating with families and professionals, and maintaining a safe learning environment.
Transcript	The transcript is the college's documentation of an individual's academic performance, and may also be referred to as an academic transcript, academic record, or college transcript. The transcript must reflect the name of the college/university as well as the student's name and list all courses taken semester-by-semester, and grades received (regardless of whether or not the grade is included in the GPA computation), credit hours, major(s), minor(s), and other academic information, depending on the institution. The OEC requires a complete transcript including the "transcript key". The transcript key is the data on the back of a transcript (or final page), also called a legend, which communicates grading types, course numbering schemas, and accreditation of institution.
OEC 12 Defined Foundational Early Childhood Credits	<p>The OEC identifies the following foundational competencies for teaching staff. Each competency area represents 3 college credits for a total of 12 accepted college credits across the areas of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to Early Childhood Education 2. Child Development 3. Health, Safety, and Nutrition (content combined into one ECE specific course) 4. Child, Family and Community