Optimization Wins
Electronic Childcare Inspections - BITS Case Study

Be One Team

BITS collaborated with OEC to implement the mobile inspection platform, supporting seamless integration with the e-license system.

Own the Outcome

The move to electronic inspections gave childcare facilities consistent, clear reporting and faster compliance processes.

Make it Better

The new system improves communication with families by posting inspection reports online and providing quick access to corrective actions.

Every year, the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) must inspect the State's 4,000+ childcare facilities, day cares, and family childcare home centers for health and safety. For years, these inspections have been performed manually, using stacks of paper forms.

Prior to 2024, a typical inspection may have looked like this: an inspector arrives on-site with a heavy bag of forms and their laptop, reviews over 160 aspects of health and safety across the facility ranging from environmental hazards to record keeping, reports the facility's next steps toward compliance, and then returns to the office to upload all that day's or week's data into a database. The facilities receiving inspection would then be tasked with interpreting the report, taking any necessary corrective action within the specified timeframe, filling out another form recording their corrective measures, and scanning that document in for review by their inspector.

In addition to being cumbersome, for the facilities receiving inspections it could be challenging to decipher the handwriting and jargon on the report. Language on the report may be inconsistent from how it's been reported in previous years' inspections, causing confusion for the staff who must address the inspector's feedback quickly to keep their facility running.

In December 2023, OEC officially rolled out electronic childcare inspections which equipped inspectors with an iPad for on-site inspections instead of pen and paper. The change to efficiency and impact on families was dramatic. "The electronic inspections streamlined so many aspects of inspections," commented Laurie Audette,

Licensing Program Manager. "The new process includes dropdown lists for templated language throughout the inspection form to standardize the inspection terminology used by our 30+ inspectors. Facilities get more consistent reporting, especially around wording for regulatory violations, and they no longer have to interpret penmanship and spelling mistakes."

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Additionally, with electronic inspections, childcare facilities are emailed a digital copy of their inspection report as soon as they electronically sign it. On that email is the link to their Corrective Action Plan to fill out online. "Facilities spend less time digging for links and uploading handwritten documents," added Audette.

Another federal requirement is that all inspection reports must be posted to a consumer-friendly website. The new virtual inspection process makes that upload seamless, and reports look more professional. Violations if cited during an inspection, are now available on this website by the next day. When facilities print and post their reports on-site, they are now much easier for parents and families to read and understand.

In 2017, BITS' Dennis Geshel, a specialist in e-licensing, initiated the suggestion that different agencies might use mobile options to lessen the dependency on paper and improve efficiencies. "Dennis and the BITS team have been helpful in problem-solving throughout, including picking up intricate nuances between the mobile inspection platform and e-license system," shared Dhwani Pandya, BITS Customer Success Manager in service to OEC. Pandya supported the iPad procurement process closely.

Childcare Licensing Specialist Kristi Morgan excitedly shared that the new system has brought more convenience to programs, small and large. "It's so much easier to perform a couple of inspections in a day, when previously it may have stretched across a couple of days. And for tiny programs where the director is one of two staff caring for many kids, quicker inspections mean I can get out of their hair faster and they can get back to serving Connecticut's families!" she shared.

As of December 2023, three types of facilities (licensed childcare centers, family homes, and group homes) have been brought into the system, and some additional legally license-exempt programs go live in October 2024. Next up is youth camps, planned to go live in summer 2025.

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