

Designated Qualified Staff Member Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Introduction

In 2024, the legislature passed the Early Start Connecticut law (PA 24-78). Part of Early Start CT updates education requirements for Designated Qualified Staff Members (DQSMs) working in **programs funded by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC)**.

This legislation is informed by the Power to the Profession Task Force's [Unifying Framework](#), which was adopted by the [Blue Ribbon Panel](#). The goal is to increase the number of state-funded classrooms taught by educators with college degrees in early childhood education.

The updated requirements for DQSMs started **July 1, 2025**.

Main updates include:

- A more gradual phase-in of education requirements for DQSMs (60% of each center's DQSMs meeting degree requirements by 2030, down from 100%)
- Educators can be “working toward” an early childhood degree and meet DQSM, with supervision
- State-funded family child care programs (DCFHs) are included
- For educators with a college degree in any field, more options to be a DQSM by completing 12 credits in early childhood education (details vary by setting, see GP A-01)

For full details – including the specific requirements, dates, and benchmarks – please refer to [General Policy \(GP\) A-01](#). Please note that these requirements do not apply to programs receiving only Care4Kids.

This document provides answers to questions programs and educators have about General Policy A-01 and how these legislative changes affect them.

If you have any additional questions, you can [speak with your Registry Education Advisor](#) or reach out to an OEC Early Start CT Program Manager by email oecc.statefunded@ct.gov.

Glossary of Terms

Term	Abbreviation or shorthand	Definition
Early Start CT Legislation	Legislation	<p>In 2024, the legislature passed Public Act 24-78 updating education requirements for Designated Qualified Staff Members (DQSMs) in programs funded by School Readiness, Child Day Care contract, State Head Start Supplement, or Smart Start. The law is often called the Early Start CT law (the listed funding streams all become Early Start on July 1, 2025). This law does not apply to programs receiving <i>only</i> Care for Kids.</p> <p>Some of the main changes in the law add options for working toward a degree in early childhood with supervision and update how the requirements phase in over time. These changes start July 1, 2025.</p>
General Policy A-01	GP A-01	<p>The document that the OEC issues to provide the policies based on the Early Start CT law above.</p> <p>There are other General Policies that address other Early Start CT requirements. All are available here on the OEC's website.</p>
Qualified Staff Member	QSM	<p>A Teacher that meets the education credential requirements in General Policy A-01 (for example, a bachelor's degree in early childhood). For more information about the qualifications that enable someone to be a QSM, please refer to General Policy A-01.</p>
Designated Qualified Staff Member	DQSM	<p>A designated qualified staff member (DQSM) is the staff person assigned—or “designated”—in the OEC Registry as the QSM for a specific classroom. Every state-funded program must identify the DQSM for each classroom serving infants through preschoolers.</p> <p>The DQSM must be someone who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is in the role of Teacher (not assistant teacher or another role), or family child care owner in a licensed family child care home • Meets DQSM qualifications (see the table starting on page 3 of the GP A-01 HERE) • Works each day in the specific classroom at least 60% of the hours the classroom is in operation <p>Please note that even if only part of a program receives state funds, all of the classrooms serving infants through preschoolers within that program must meet this requirement.</p>

Term	Abbreviation or shorthand	Definition
OEC 12 Defined Foundational Early Childhood Education Credits	12 Defined 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.</p> <p>The competencies are:</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 <p>Do you have a BA in a field other than ECE and fewer than 12 ECE college credits? The OEC will provide scholarships at partner colleges (i.e., CT State community college campuses, Charter Oak State College) to get your 12 foundational ECE Credits. See scholarship information in the OEC Registry.</p>
Accepted until June 30, 2030	Any 12 ECE credits	The OEC accepts <u>any</u> 12 ECE credits in association with a bachelor's or associate degree until June 30, 2030, at which time only the 12 defined credits are accepted. An individual meeting the <u>any</u> 12 credits prior to June 30 will retain that designation after June 30, 2030.
OEC Registry	Registry	The online platform where all programs are required to update their staffing and professional development information.
Registry Education Advisor	Registry Advisors	The OEC has team members assigned to each county who are experts in the Registry and early childhood education. They can help teachers access scholarships, help program directors update their Registry account, and more. Please find them here on the OEC website .
Supervised option		Educators who are working on a degree in early childhood education have an opportunity to still meet the requirements (<i>i.e.</i> , be a DQSM), but they must be supervised by an early childhood educator meeting a bachelor's degree option. See more in the FAQs below.
On-Site QSM Supervisor (for centers, group homes, and/or license exempt programs)	On-Site QSM Supervisor	<p>An on-site QSM Supervisor of a DQSM is another Teacher or administrator who works in the same location as the DQSM's classroom during the majority of hours the classroom is operating.</p> <p>The QSM Supervisor's role is to support reflection about curriculum and best practices and serve as a peer mentor to the DQSM teacher (e.g., by advising on curriculum design and implementation, sharing best practices, and supporting high-quality child development and learning experiences). Head Teachers who meet the QSM degree requirements will already fit</p>

Term	Abbreviation or shorthand	Definition
		<p>the supervisor role, since they are already providing support to other teachers in the program as part of licensing requirements.</p> <p>To qualify, QSM Supervisors must have one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A bachelor's degree or higher in ECE ○ A bachelor's degree or higher in any field plus CSDE ECE teacher certification ○ A bachelor's degree or higher in any field plus ANY 12 ECE credits ○ A bachelor's degree or higher in any field PLUS OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational ECE credits ○ A bachelor's degree with 2015 grandfathered status <p>Program directors and administrators should designate the on-site QSM Supervisor in the Registry via the QSM Supervisor Agreement Attestation Form completed by both the QSM Supervisor and the supervisee and uploaded to the supervisee's Registry account. OEC Registry staff will verify the document and tag the supervisor/supervisee if each is eligible.</p>
Off-Site QSM Supervisor (for family child care homes)	Off-Site QSM Supervisor or FCC QSM supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having an "off-site" QSM Supervisor means coaching, advising, and support where the person supervising does not work at the family child care program and does not offer child care as part of supervision. • To qualify, QSM Supervisors must have a bachelor's degree or higher in ECE and have expertise to support reflection about curriculum and best practices. QSM Supervisors may include but are not limited to the roles of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child care educators in other programs ○ Education consultant ○ Staff of a Staffed Family Child Care Network ○ Apprenticeship coach ○ College faculty ○ Community of Practice facilitator ○ Others who can regularly advise on curriculum <p>QSM eligibility is automatically calculated for every OEC Registry account holder and can be found on the user's membership card and Education and Training Report. Please check eligibility before uploading a QSM Supervisor Attestation form to your Registry account. OEC Registry staff will verify the document and tag the supervisor/supervisee if each is eligible.</p>

Frequently Asked Questions

DQSM Compliance / Eligibility - All Programs

Question	Answer														
How do I know which QSM option I meet?	<p>The OEC Registry automatically calculates QSM eligibility based on the education uploaded to the account. Every account holder's membership card and Education and Training Report shows eligibility in terms of both settings: Center / Group Home / License Exempt program and Family Child Care Home). Eligibility also indicates if a user can be a QSM Supervisor if all other supervisor eligibility is met.</p> <p>Centers (DCCC), Group Homes (DCGH), License exempt programs</p> <table> <tr> <th>Education</th><th>Shows on Registry membership card and Education & Training Report as...</th></tr> <tr> <td>Bachelor's degree or higher ECE</td><td>QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs</td></tr> <tr> <td>Bachelor's degree non ECE or higher in any field plus CSDE ECE teacher certification</td><td>QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs</td></tr> <tr> <td>Bachelor's degree any non ECE field or higher PLUS 12 defined ECE credits (beginning 07-01-2030)</td><td>QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs</td></tr> <tr> <td>Bachelor's any non ECE field or higher PLUS any 12 ECE credits (this option sunsets 06-30-2030 at which time only the 12 defined credits is an option)</td><td>QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs</td></tr> <tr> <td>Have grandfathered QSM status with expiration = 2099</td><td>QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs</td></tr> <tr> <td>Actively working toward a bachelor's degree in ECE, completing minimum 9 credit / year, and POS on file</td><td>QSM Eligible: Yes; Cannot supervise QSMs</td></tr> </table>	Education	Shows on Registry membership card and Education & Training Report as...	Bachelor's degree or higher ECE	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs	Bachelor's degree non ECE or higher in any field plus CSDE ECE teacher certification	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs	Bachelor's degree any non ECE field or higher PLUS 12 defined ECE credits (beginning 07-01-2030)	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs	Bachelor's any non ECE field or higher PLUS any 12 ECE credits (this option sunsets 06-30-2030 at which time only the 12 defined credits is an option)	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs	Have grandfathered QSM status with expiration = 2099	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs	Actively working toward a bachelor's degree in ECE, completing minimum 9 credit / year, and POS on file	QSM Eligible: Yes; Cannot supervise QSMs
Education	Shows on Registry membership card and Education & Training Report as...														
Bachelor's degree or higher ECE	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs														
Bachelor's degree non ECE or higher in any field plus CSDE ECE teacher certification	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs														
Bachelor's degree any non ECE field or higher PLUS 12 defined ECE credits (beginning 07-01-2030)	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs														
Bachelor's any non ECE field or higher PLUS any 12 ECE credits (this option sunsets 06-30-2030 at which time only the 12 defined credits is an option)	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs														
Have grandfathered QSM status with expiration = 2099	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs														
Actively working toward a bachelor's degree in ECE, completing minimum 9 credit / year, and POS on file	QSM Eligible: Yes; Cannot supervise QSMs														

Options below require ON-SITE supervision; plus active account, confirmed employment at the same program. Supervisor's role cannot be assistant teacher / aide. QSM Supervisor Attestation form must be completed and uploaded to supervisee's account.	
Associate degree in early childhood education	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
Associate degree in any field plus the OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational early childhood education credits (Beginning 07-01-2030)	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
Associate degree in any field PLUS ANY 12 early childhood credits (Ends 06-30-2030)	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
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	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
Current CDA Credential (All other DQSM must have an active CDA Credential and be supervised by C 1-5 on-site staffer; NOTE: This option does not count for Program %)	Does not count in program %
Family Child Care Homes (DCFH)	
Education	Shows on Registry membership card and Education & Training Report as...
Associate degree or higher in early childhood education, OR 2015 one-time grandfathered based on bachelor's degree plus 12 ECE credits and work in funded center.	QSM Eligible: Yes, family home

	Options below require OFF-SITE supervision; plus active account. Supervisor's role cannot be assistant teacher / aide. QSM Supervisor Attestation form must be completed and uploaded to supervisees account.	
	Associate degree in any field plus the OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational early childhood education credit (beginning 07-01-2030)	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
	Associate degree in any field PLUS ANY 12 early childhood credits (Ends 06-30-25)	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
	Actively working toward an associate degree or higher in early childhood education with a current plan of study and showing progress of at least 3 credits per academic year	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
How do I make sure my program is compliant?	<p>Make sure your registry account is up to date with information about your classroom, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Names of classrooms Ages served in each classroom Staff assigned including designating the QSM for each classroom <p>Program reports then show how your program meets QSM requirements at each benchmark.</p> <p>To make someone a Designated Qualified Staff Member (DQSM) in a state funded program, the program's administrative access user must do the following in the OEC Registry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm staff employment Assign staffer the role of Teacher in a specific classroom / group Assign staffer as the DQSM from that classroom's QSM drop down 	
How do I support my staff to achieve DQSM Status?	<p>The OEC Registry automatically calculates who is QSM eligible. Eligibility is noted on every user's membership card and Education and Training Report. Make sure your staff have their most up to date credentials in the OEC Registry.</p> <p>You can also reference the table in the guidance letter here on steps to take, based on a staff member's current level of education.</p>	

If I have a bachelor's degree and a Connecticut State Department of Education certification, pre-K or Kindergarten endorsement, am I automatically eligible?	<p>Not automatically. A CSDE endorsement (see list) including birth to preschool or any portion thereof must include 12 credits in early childhood education (ECE) according to OEC's Common Standard for Assessing Early Childhood Credits and Degrees to meet QSM requirements. Teachers should submit their transcripts for a review of these credits in the Registry.</p> <p>If you have a CSDE ECE certification and have taken 12 ECE credits, you qualify.</p>
What does it mean to be 'working toward' a degree?	Some educators may qualify for DQSM status if they are in the process of getting a degree, as long as they are both: 1.) QSM Supervised (see "supervision requirements" in the glossary above), and 2.) meeting the minimum coursework requirements each academic year.
How many college credits are DQSM educators working toward a degree expected to take per year?	<p>In a child care center, group home or license exempt program: To qualify for DQSM status, educators must pursue a minimum of 9 credits per academic year—or approximately 3 courses—toward an early childhood education degree (associate or bachelor's). Please also see supervision requirements in the glossary above.</p> <p>In a family child care home: To qualify for DQSM status, educators must successfully complete at least 3 credits in their plan of study per academic year (or approximately 1 course). Please also see supervision requirements in the glossary above.</p>
What scholarships does the OEC offer for educators to pursue early childhood education college courses and degrees?	<p>OEC provides scholarships to obtain a degree for educators who do not already have a degree in early childhood education. Scholarships cover tuition, fees, and textbooks. You can apply for a scholarship through the Registry and contact your Registry Advisor if you need assistance.</p> <p>New! For educators who hold a non-ECE degree but have fewer than 12 ECE credits: The OEC now provides scholarships to complete 12 defined foundational ECE credits at some colleges approved by the OEC for this purpose. Providers may be eligible if they have fewer than 12 ECE college credits, even if they have a non-ECE degree.</p>
How does the phase in expectation work?	<p>Only for centers, group homes and license exempt programs:</p> <p>The law now requires a phased-in plan to ensure that 60% or more DQSMs meet a qualifying degree requirement by July 1, 2030.</p> <p>There will be two phase-in benchmarks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By July 1, 2025- June 30th 2027: 25% of DQSMs meet a DQSM qualifying degree option at each state funded center

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2030: 50% or more of DQSMs meet a DQSM qualifying degree option at each state funded center <p>By July 2030 onward, 60% of DQSMs meet a qualifying degree option at each state funded center</p> <p>Any classroom without a DQSM must have a Teacher with a minimum of a CDA credential, an active plan to meet one of the degree options, and have a designated on-site QSM Supervisor meeting a bachelor's degree option (see list). Active plans must demonstrate that an educator is making progress on a course of study that will enable them to meet one of the degree options.</p> <p>As an example, if a state funded program has three classrooms serving infants through preschoolers, 60% (or two of the three classrooms) must have a designated QSM meeting the bachelor's degree options by July 1, 2030 (regardless of how many of the classrooms are state funded). The remaining classroom must have a Teacher with a minimum of a CDA credential, an active plan to meet one of the degree options, and have a designated on-site supervisor meeting a bachelor's degree option (see list).</p>
--	---

QSM Supervision – All Programs

Question	Answer
How does QSM Supervision work in practice?	<p>If my program is a center, group home, or license-exempt program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators in these settings who have or are actively working toward an associate degree or higher in early childhood education (9+ credits per year) or have an associate degree in any field and 12 ece credits or hold a current CDA Credential can qualify as a DQSM, but only if they have on-site supervision (see definition for on-site QSM Supervisor in the glossary above). Program directors and administrators should designate the on-site QSM Supervisor in the Registry via the QSM Supervisor Agreement Attestation Form completed by both the QSM Supervisor and the supervisee and uploaded to the supervisee's Registry account. OEC Registry staff will verify the document and show the supervisor/supervisee role on each account if each is eligible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please note: Changes in the QSM Supervisor's status in Registry can make the supervised DQSM no longer eligible. For example, if the QSM Supervisor leaves the program, this means

	<p>the DQSM would need to have finished their degree in ECE or have a new QSM Supervisor to remain eligible as a DQSM.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All staff and program liaisons should regularly review their programs' Education and Training Reports to confirm DQSM compliance. <p>A person who is required to have QSM Supervision cannot provide QSM Supervision to another DQSM.</p>
	<p>If I am the owner of a family child care home and am actively working toward my degree in early childhood education?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For family child care homes, the owner must be the QSM, per licensing staffing regulations. • If a family child care owner is working toward their associate degree or higher in early childhood education (3+ credits per year), they can meet DQSM with supervision (see definition for off-site QSM Supervisor in the glossary). • The off-site QSM Supervisor should be designated in the Registry via the QSM Supervisor Agreement Attestation Form completed by both the QSM Supervisor and the supervisee and uploaded to the supervisee's Registry account. OEC Registry staff will verify the document and show the supervisor/supervisee role on each account if eligible.
What is the deadline for finding and identifying my QSM Supervisor in the Registry?	As of July 1 st , 2025, staff members working toward a degree in ECE should indicate in the Registry who is providing QSM Supervision.
How often should I contact/meet with my QSM Supervisor?	QSM Supervision is intended to support Teachers' growth and learning in the early childhood field. Teachers and QSM Supervisors should interact frequently enough to build a meaningful relationship that addresses the needs and supports the growth of the Teacher.
When will I no longer need QSM Supervision?	<p>For Centers, Group Homes, and License Exempt Programs: You will no longer need QSM Supervision when you receive a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in ECE, or • Bachelor's degree or higher in any field PLUS CSDE ECE certification, or Bachelor's degree in non-ECE PLUS any 12 ECE credits (if completed by 06-30-2030) or • Bachelor's degree in any field and OEC's 12 defined foundational ECE credits <p>For Family Child Care Homes: You will no longer need QSM Supervision when you receive an associate's degree or higher in ECE.</p>

Can one QSM Supervisor supervise multiple teachers?	<p>For Centers, Group Homes, and License Exempt Programs: Yes, one QSM Supervisor may support multiple teachers at the same site.</p> <p>If the QSM Supervisor leaves, you'll have to upload an updated QSM Supervisor Agreement Attestation Form so the Registry can be updated to assign supervisor role to someone else.</p> <p>For Family Child Care Homes: Yes, one off-site supervisor may supervise multiple family child care home owner DQSMs.</p>
Can someone who is QSM supervised provide QSM supervision to someone else?	No. An individual who is required under GP A-01 to receive QSM Supervision may not be designated as the QSM Supervisor for another individual.

Degrees and Higher Education Coursework – All Programs

Question	Answer
What do I do if I have a degree from another country (non-US)?	You will need to have a formal degree equivalency report from a NACES member organization and upload the report to your OEC Registry
Is coursework available in Spanish?	Yes, some CT State campuses offer courses in Spanish. The OEC also partners with InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico for an online early childhood degree as well as the 12 defined foundational ECE credits, fully in Spanish. OEC scholarships cover this degree (contact your Registry Education Advisor for more detail).
Is coursework available online?	Yes, online degrees and coursework in early childhood education are available through Charter Oak State College and in Spanish through the OEC's partnership with InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico (contact your Registry Education Advisor for more detail).

How do I know which QSM option I meet? The OEC Registry automatically calculates QSM eligibility based on the education uploaded to the account. Every account holder's membership card and Education and Training Report shows eligibility in terms of both settings: Center / Group Home / License Exempt program (shows as **C** options) and Family Child Care Home (shows as **F** options). Eligibility also indicates if a user can be a QSM Supervisor if all other supervisor eligibility is met.

Options Table: Centers (DCCC), Group Homes (DCGH), License exempt programs

Option	Education	Shows on Registry membership card and Education & Training Report as...
C1	Bachelor's degree or higher ECE	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs
C2	Bachelor's degree non ECE or higher in any field plus CSDE ECE teacher certification	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs
C3	Bachelor's degree any non ECE field or higher PLUS 12 defined ECE credits (beginning 07-01-2030)	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs
C4	Bachelor's any non ECE field or higher PLUS any 12 ECE credits (this option sunsets 06-30-2030 at which time only the 12 defined credits is an option)	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs
C5	Have grandfathered QSM status with expiration = 2099	QSM Eligible: Yes; Can supervise QSMs
C6	Actively working toward a bachelor's degree in ECE, completing minimum 9 credit / year, and POS on file	QSM Eligible: Yes; Cannot supervise QSMs
Options below require ON-SITE supervision by user holding C1-5 option above; plus active account, confirmed employment at the same program. Supervisor's role cannot be assistant teacher / aide. QSM Supervisor Attestation form must be completed and uploaded to supervisees account.		
C7	Associate degree in early childhood education	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
C8	Associate degree in any field plus the OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational early childhood education credits (Beginning 07-01-2030)	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
C9	Associate degree in any field PLUS ANY 12 early childhood credits (Ends 06-30-2030)	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
C10	Actively working toward an associate degree or higher in early childhood education with a current	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision

	plan of study and showing progress of at least 9 credits per academic year	
C11	Current CDA Credential (All other DQSM must have an active CDA Credential and be supervised by C 1-5 on-site staffer; NOTE: This option does not count for Program %)	Does not count in program %

Options Table: Family Child Care Homes (DCFH)

Option	Education	Shows on Registry membership card and Education & Training Report as...
F1	Associate degree or higher in early childhood education, OR 2015 one-time grandfathered based on bachelor's degree plus 12 ECE credits and work in funded center.	QSM Eligible: Yes, family home
Options below require OFF-SITE supervision by user holding C1-5 option above; plus active account. Supervisor's role cannot be assistant teacher / aide. QSM Supervisor Attestation form must be completed and uploaded to supervisees account.		
F2	Associate degree in any field plus the OEC's 12 DEFINED foundational early childhood education credit (beginning 07-01-2030)	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
F3	Associate degree in any field PLUS ANY 12 early childhood credits (Ends 06-30-25)	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision
F4	Actively working toward an associate degree or higher in early childhood education with a current plan of study and showing progress of at least 3 credits per academic year	QSM Eligible: Associate level with supervision