



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



### Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program General Policy A-06

#### Policy Related to State-Funded Spaces and Reimbursement

- X OEC Early Start CT Programs
- X OEC Smart Start CT Programs

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#### **POLICY**

Early Start CT and Smart Start state-funded programs provide funding for different types of spaces. These space types are defined by specific criteria and in some cases, reimbursement rates. State-funded programs should utilize their spaces in a manner consistent with the needs of their program and local community.

- **EARLY START CT (ESCT)**

Programs with ESCT spaces that offer twelve (12) months of care shall operate at least forty-eight (48) weeks during each calendar year.

Programs with ESCT spaces that offer ten (10) months of care shall operate at least forty (40) weeks during each calendar year.

#### **Infant/Toddler Space Types**

<b>Ages Served</b>	<b>Space Type</b>	<b>Months of Care Provided Annually</b>	<b>Care Level</b>	<b>Annual Reimbursement Rate</b>
6 weeks – 3 years	Full Time	12	Care is provided <b>35-50 hours per week</b>	\$13,500
6 weeks – 3 years	Half Time	12	Care is provided <b>16-34 hours per week</b>	\$9,300
6 weeks – 3 years	Quarter Time	12	Care is provided <b>2-15 hours per week</b>	\$4,800
6 weeks – 3 years	Full Time	10	Care is provided <b>35-50 hours per week</b>	\$11,250
6 weeks – 3 years	Half Time	10	Care is provided <b>16-34 hours per week</b>	\$7,750
6 weeks – 3 years	Quarter Time	10	Care is provided <b>2-15 hours per week</b>	\$4,000



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### Preschool Space Types

OEC licensing requires children between 2 years, 8 months and 2 years, 11 months of age who are enrolled in a state-funded preschool space must have written parent and program approval.

Children enrolled in a state-funded preschool space **may not be eligible for kindergarten.**

Ages Served	Space Type	Months of Care Provided Annually	Care Level Definition	Annual Reimbursement Rate
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Full Time	12	Care is provided <b>35-50 hours per week</b>	\$10,500
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Half Time	12	Care is provided <b>16-34 hours per week</b>	\$7,200
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Quarter Time	12	Care is provided <b>2-15 hours per week</b>	\$3,600
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Full Time	10	Care is provided <b>35-50 hours per week</b>	\$8,750
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Half Time	10	Care is provided <b>16-34 hours per week</b>	\$6,000
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Quarter Time	10	Care is provided <b>2-15 hours per week</b>	\$3,000

### School Age Space Types

Ages Served	Space Type	Care Level Definition	Annual Reimbursement Rate
Enrolled in Kindergarten - 12 years	School Age	Care is provided <b>at least 35 hours per week when school is not in session and 10-25 hours per week when school is in session</b>	\$4,125
Enrolled in Kindergarten - 12 years	School Age	Care is provided <b>at least 10-25 hours per week when school is in session, 10 months per year only</b>	\$2,700
Enrolled in Kindergarten - 12 years	School Age	Care is provided <b>at least 35 hours per week when school is not in session, 2 months per year only</b>	\$1,150



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### ESCT State Head Start – Early Head Start Space Types

Ages Served	Space Type	Months of Care Provided Annually	Care Level Definition
6 weeks – 3 years	Full Time	12	Care is provided <b>35-50 hours per week</b>
6 weeks – 3 years	Half Time	12	Care is provided <b>16-34 hours per week</b>
6 weeks – 3 years	Quarter Time	12	Care is provided <b>2-15 hours per week</b>
6 weeks – 3 years	Full Time	10	Care is provided <b>35-50 hours per week</b>
6 weeks – 3 years	Half Time	10	Care is provided <b>16-34 hours per week</b>
6 weeks – 3 years	Quarter Time	10	Care is provided <b>2-15 hours per week</b>

### ESCT State Head Start – Head Start Preschool Space Types

Ages Served	Space Type	Months of Care Provided Annually	Care Level Definition
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Full Time	12	Care is provided <b>35-50 hours per week</b>
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Half Time	12	Care is provided <b>16-34 hours per week</b>
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Quarter Time	12	Care is provided <b>2-15 hours per week</b>
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Full Time	10	Care is provided <b>35-50 hours per week</b>
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Half Time	10	Care is provided <b>16-34 hours per week</b>
2 years, 8 months – 5 years	Quarter Time	10	Care is provided <b>2-15 hours per week</b>



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### SMART START

#### Preschool Space Types

Children enrolled in a state-funded preschool space **may not be eligible for kindergarten.**

Ages Served	Space Type	Months of Care Provided Annually	Care Level Definition
Preschool age	School Day/School Year	10 (minimum of 180 days)	Care is provided <b>6 hours per day, 5 days per week</b>

#### Utilization of Spaces

- **ESCT**
  - Programs are expected to utilize all state-funded spaces on a regular basis. Children enrolled in ESCT spaces must attend the program at least one (1) day per monthly reporting period for the program to be eligible for reimbursement.
- **Smart Start**
  - School districts must advertise and recruit students to fill all state-funded spaces. Priority must be given to students from low-income families, who are identified based on their eligibility for free and reduced school lunches, family income, or other priority factors identified in the district's approved Smart Start application.

#### Reimbursement

- **ESCT**
  - Programs that utilize at least eighty-five percent (85%) of their assigned ESCT spaces each quarter will receive a full quarterly payment.
  - Programs that do not meet the eighty-five percent (85%) threshold of their monthly utilization will receive a reduced payment.
    - The reduced payment is calculated by multiplying the number of utilized spaces by the monthly reimbursement rate for the space type in which the child is enrolled (and attended at least one day during the previous monthly reporting period).
- **Smart Start**
  - Smart Start recipients are awarded \$75,000 per classroom for fifteen (15) enrolled children; up to three (3) additional children may be enrolled, however, the program is not eligible to receive additional Smart Start funding.



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### Temporary Operating Waivers

ESCT and Smart Start programs experiencing operational challenges may request a waiver to temporarily operate with fewer than the otherwise required number of hours for each space type. Examples of operational challenges may consist of but are not limited to:

- Staffing shortage that limits operating hours
- Physical building damage or construction that limits/restricts program space
- Other circumstances as may be identified by program.

Programs seeking a **temporary operating waiver** shall do the following:

1. Request a meeting with their assigned OEC Program Manager to discuss the operational challenges that create the need for a temporary change in program operating hours;
2. Submit the “OEC ECE Temporary Operating Waiver” form which must include the following:
  - a. Assurances that the program has surveyed families in writing about access to services and an explanation of how families’ needs for services were assessed;
  - b. Details about the factor(s) that necessitates a temporary operating schedule waiver;
  - c. Specific action(s) taken by the program to limit the need for a temporary operating schedule waiver;
  - d. An assessment of how the change(s) in the program’s operating schedule will align with the identified families’ needs;
  - e. Confirmation that the temporary operating changes requested will not limit families’ access to the services requested.

Temporary operating waivers will only be approved by OEC for a fixed period. Waivers are permitted only once per contract period.

### ESCT State Head Start Allocations

ESCT legislation requires contractors receiving ESCT State Head Start funding to allocate seventy-five percent (75%) of that funding to spaces for children and the remaining twenty-five (25%) to improving program quality. “Program quality improvement” is defined as an increase or expansion of spaces for children. Acceptable program quality improvement may also include:

- Creating or expanding early literacy programming for children in Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start;
- Creating or expanding social emotional learning programming for children in Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start;
- Increasing compensation for providers
- Increasing career opportunities for entry level staff (for example, through scholarships, mentoring and coaching)



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- Improving preventive mental health screenings, assessments, and interventions for children;
- Enhancing mental health resources by hiring additional mental health professionals
- Hiring additional qualified family services staff or home visitors to expand comprehensive services to children in non-HS/EHS and/or ESCT-funded spaces to enhance family-staff relationships and improve the quality of individualized services;
- Providing training on trauma-informed approaches to all staff, governing boards, and Policy Councils, ensuring that training is accompanied by coaching and opportunities for reflective practice and supervision;
- Enhancing transportation services to promote more regular participation by children and families in programs;
- Support the Head Start on Housing (HSOH) program in providing resources and stable housing to Head Start/Early Head Start families experiencing homelessness.

Programs shall submit a report detailing these program quality initiatives to their Program Manager at the beginning of each contract period to OEC.

### **FURTHER POLICY INFORMATION**

- A state-funded space may be classified as utilized only once during each monthly reporting period.
- Programs may utilize a full-time space to serve one or two children. If a full-time space is split between two children, a minimum of thirty-five (35) hours must be utilized between the two children weekly. Programs will be paid for a full-time space if the minimum of 35 hours is met.
  - If only a portion of a shared space is filled during any month, the program will only be reimbursed for a half-time space.
- If more than one child is enrolled in a single space and each attends the program at least one day in that space during the monthly reporting period, the program is only eligible to receive reimbursement for services provided to one child.
- If a child transitions enrollment from one type of state-funded space to a different type of space at the same program site, the program is eligible to be reimbursed for the space in which the child was enrolled and attended the majority of the monthly reporting period. For example, if a child is in a toddler space for 15 days and transitions to a preschool space and attends for 5 days, the program will be reimbursed for the toddler space only.
- If a child transitions enrollment from one funded space-type to a state-funded space in a different program during the same monthly reporting period and attends at least one day



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in each space, both programs are eligible to be reimbursed for that monthly reporting period.

- Programs are strongly encouraged by the OEC to continue to enroll families into Early Start CT *even when the program is meeting the **minimum requirement** of eighty-five (85%) percent utilization.*
  - Eighty-five (85%) percent utilization of ESCT spaces is a **minimum**. Programs shall strive to be at one hundred percent (100%) utilization over time.
- The percentage of utilized spaces and funds earned will be calculated at the monthly report site level in ECE Reporter.
- Smart Start districts enrolling fewer students than their approved grant application will receive decreased funding, based upon an annual award of \$5,000 per space utilized.
- If an ESCT Contractor has been overpaid, the OEC may, at the discretion of the OEC Commissioner:
  - apply a reduction to future payments under ESCT;
  - request that the Contractor return the unexpended funds to the OEC within thirty (30) days of the end of the contract period (or earlier if the contract is terminated) or;
  - allow the Contractor to retain the funds for recurring operating expenses reasonably attributed to the delivery of contractual services.
- If a program receives approval of a Temporary Operating Waiver, all changes in operating schedules must be reported to the OEC Licensing Division, in accordance with licensing regulations, and must be reflected in the Early Childhood Professional Registry Profile.

### **DEFINITIONS**

- I. **ESCT:** Early Start CT
- II. **Early Start CT State Head Start:** The funding in Early Start CT that is available only to federally funded Head Start/Early Head Start grant recipients
- III. **Monthly Reporting Period:** A time established by OEC with specific start and end dates for programs to collect and submit data to demonstrate their eligibility for reimbursement in a state-funded space
- IV. **Policy Council:** There is a governing body that consists of parents and community members who help lead and make decisions about **federal** Head Start programs.
- V. **Utilized Space:** A state-funded space in which an enrolled child attends the program at least one (1) day during the monthly reporting period



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*In the unlikely event that any provision of this General Policy is found to be inconsistent with any contract or grant provision, the contract or grant shall govern.*

For further information concerning this GENERAL POLICY please contact your OEC Program Manager or visit <https://www.ctoec.org/contact-us/>