



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood

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Office of Early Childhood 2015 Legislative Update

The following is a compilation of legislation concerning early childhood and of interest to the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) that passed in the 2015 Regular Session and the June Special Session of the General Assembly. This document provides a summary of each bill. Please refer to the specific text of each public act or special act and related analysis found on the CT General Assembly [webpage](#) for a complete understanding of each piece of legislation.

If you have any questions, please contact Maggie Adair, Director of Government & Community Relations, at 860-713-6413 or maggie.adair@ct.gov

Public Act 15-5 - An Act Implementing Provisions of the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017 Concerning General Government, Education and Health and Human Services – Effective July 1, 2015

This is the 686-page budget implementer act. This was an Emergency Certified bill that did not require the usual committee action.

Here are the highlights of the act related to early childhood:

- **Sec. 259-261** - Designates the Office of Early Childhood the lead agency for the Birth-to-Three program, which provides early intervention services to families with infants and toddlers, birth to age three, who have developmental delays or disabilities. Birth to Three statutes moved from Department of Developmental Services to Office of Early Childhood. It also requires the Office of Early Childhood Commissioner to post notice of intent to adopt or amend regulations governing the collection of fees from early intervention service recipients on the eRegulations system rather than print the notice in the Connecticut Law Journal.
- **Sec. 262** - Requires the Office of Early Childhood to require the Birth-to-Three program to notify parents and guardians of the availability of hearing tests for children receiving services under the program and exhibiting delayed speech, language, or hearing development. **Sec. 521** repeals P.A. 15-81, which imposed the same requirement for DDS, which no longer is the lead agency for Birth to Three.
- **Sec. 349 & 350** - Repeals coverage limits for services through the Birth-to-Three program. Current law limits this coverage to \$6,400 per year per child, up to \$19,200 for the three years, except that coverage under a group plan for a child with Autism Spectrum

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Disorder is limited to \$50,000 per year and \$150,000 in total.

- **Sec. 282** - Requires the State Department of Education to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Office of Early Childhood, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and the Departments of Developmental Services, Children and Families, Social Services, and Correction regarding the provision of special education and related services to children.
- **Sec. 307 and 310** - Requires a regional education service center located in both Sheff and non-Sheff communities operating a magnet preschool program to charge tuition to the parent of guardian in an amount up to \$4,053 annually for households earning more than 75 percent of the state median income. Households earning income at or below 75 percent of the state median income shall not be charged tuition. The State Department of Education, within available appropriations, shall be responsible for any unpaid tuition.
- **Sec. 114** - Requires each operator of an organized youth athletic activity, involving participants age 7 to 19, to make available upon registration a written or electronic statement regarding concussions to each youth and a parent or guardian of each youth participating in the youth athletic activity.
- **Sec. 323 and 465** - Makes managerial and professional employees within the Office of Early Childhood exempt from state employee classified service.
- **Sec. 324** - Increases the School Readiness per child rate from \$8,670 to not more than \$8,927.
- **Sec. 325** - Allows existing state-funded Head Start grantees to shift existing funding from Head Start to an existing Early Head program.
- **Sec. 401** - Creates a two-generational school readiness and workforce development pilot program located in Greater Hartford, New Haven, Norwalk, Meriden, Colchester and Bridgeport. Creates an interagency working group, of which the Office of Early Childhood is a member.
- **Sec. 464** - Carries forward up to \$375,250 for a child discontinuity study currently being conducted by the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering for Fiscal Year 16 and 17 (an additional \$150,000 from Smart Start funding is transferred for this study).
- **Sec. 485** - Establishes a Connecticut Low-Wage Employer Advisory Board that will advise the Labor Commissioner, the Office of Early Childhood, Department of Social Services, and Department of Developmental Services on matters related to: (1) the causes and effects of businesses paying low wages to residents of the state, (2) public assistance usage among working residents of the state, (3) minimum wage rates necessary to ensure working residents of the state may achieve an economically stable standard of living, (4) improvement of the quality of public assistance programs affecting such residents, (5) wages and working conditions for the workforce delivering services to low-wage working families, and (6) reliance of businesses on state-funded public assistance programs. Members of the Board shall include a worker employed by a state-funded child care program, a child care advocacy organization, and a parent of a child enrolled in a state-funded child care program. A report must be submitted by December 1, 2015 to the legislative Labor, Human Services, and Education Committees and to the Commissioners of Labor, Social Services and Early Childhood.

[Public Act 244](#) – An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017, and Making Appropriations Therefor, and Other Provisions Related to Revenue,

Deficiency Appropriations and Tax Fairness and Economic Development – Effective July 1, 2015

- **Sec. 25** - During the fiscal years ending June 30, 2016, and June 30, 2017, \$1 million of federal funds received by the Department of Education, from Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), shall be transferred to the Office of Early Childhood in each such fiscal year, for the Birth-to-Three program, in order to carry out Part B responsibilities consistent with the IDEA.
- **Sec. 44** - Transfers \$150,000 in Tobacco Settlement funds from the Smart Start account to the Office of the Comptroller to be used for a grant to the University of Connecticut to conduct a School Readiness regression discontinuity study.
- **Sec. 51** - Transfers up to \$2 million in FY17 in Tobacco Settlement funds from the Smart Start account to the State Department of Education for the purpose of providing grants to local and regional boards of education to reimburse costs incurred in the implementation, on or before July 1, 2017, of a kindergarten entrance inventory developed by the Office of Early Childhood for each child enrolled in kindergarten in the state for the purpose of measuring the child's level of preparedness for kindergarten.
- **Sec. 90** - Reduces Smart Start operating funding from \$10 million to \$5 million in FY16 and FY17. States that up to \$10 million will be appropriated each fiscal year thereafter up to 2025.

Public Act 227 – An Act Concerning the Office of Early Childhood – Effective July 1, 2015

This is the Office of Early Childhood technical bill. Here are the highlights of the act:

- **Sec. 1 and 2** - Removes the School Readiness residency requirement, which will now allow providers to enroll eligible children from other communities who need access to high-quality affordable early care and education.
- **Sec. 3** - Increases the amount of unexpended School Readiness funding to be used for staff scholarships from \$500,000 to \$1 million annually and increasing the individual staff scholarships from \$5,000 to \$10,000 annually.
- **Sec. 5** - Removes the requirement for the Office of Early Childhood to submit a School Readiness Priority School District unmet need report.
- **Sec. 6** - Changes the Care4Kids redetermination window to 12 months, as prescribed by federal law, which will increase continuity of care for the child and parent.
- **Sec. 6** - Removes the requirement for Care4Kids to mail written notice of program changes to parents and providers, for cost-savings of \$15,000 per mailing.
- **Sec. 8, 17, 20 and 25** - Removes the word “day care” and replaces it with “child care” in the licensing statutes.
- **Sec. 10 and 11** – Clarifies that Smart Start has an operating and capital grant account.
- **Sec. 12** - Clarifies that Smart Start grantees are awarded a “grant” rather than be reimbursed for operating expenses.
- **Sec. 13** - Adds members to the Early Childhood Cabinet to comply with the federal Preschool Development Grant as well as adding the Lieutenant Governor.
- **Sec. 14, 23 and 27** – Deletes reference to the Children’s Trust Fund.

- **Sec. 16 & 18**– Commissioner of Early Childhood may resolve any disciplinary action against a licensee by accepting the voluntary surrender of the license of such licensee for family child care, child care centers, and youth camps.
- **Sec. 19** - Any person or entity who is the subject of an investigation or disciplinary action while holding a license issued by the Office of Early Childhood or having held such a license within eighteen months of the commencement of such investigation or disciplinary action, shall be considered to hold a valid license for purposes of such investigation or disciplinary action.
- **Sec. 21** - In the case of an application for renewal of a license that has expired, the commissioner may renew such expired license within thirty days of the date of such expiration upon receipt of a renewal application and accompanying licensure fee.
- **Sec. 22** - Moves the statutory reference to Even Start from SDE to the Office of Early Childhood.
- **Sec. 26** - Renames the KEA back to the “kindergarten entrance inventory” and deletes the word “implement” to clarify that the OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD will develop the KEI, but does not implement the KEI. (An amount of \$2 million is transferred from Smart Start funding in FY17 to SDE to implement the KEI.)

**Public Act 15-134 – An Act Concerning Early Childhood Educator and Initiatives –
Effective July 1, 2015**

- **Sec. 1** - Requires the Office of Early Childhood to conduct a trend analysis of unapproved early childhood degree programs to determine if they are aligned with NAEYC teacher preparation standards.
- **Sec. 2** - Requires magnet and charter schools to become NAEYC accredited beginning in the 2017-2018 school year.
- **Sec. 3** - Requires the Office of Early Childhood to collaborate with local and regional early childhood councils, and the Office of Early Childhood may, within available appropriations, provide funding to these entities.
- **Sec. 4** - Requires the Office of Early Childhood to develop a plan by January 1, 2016 to assist early childhood program providers that accept state funds in the implementation of staff qualification requirements, including supporting teachers in obtaining a bachelor’s degree, increasing salaries for those teachers obtaining a bachelor’s degree, and retaining teachers with such degree.
- **Sec. 5** - Requires the Office of Early Childhood to submit a report July 1, annually, regarding the status of school readiness providers’ compliance with staff qualification requirements.
- **Sec. 6** - Requires State Department of Education to include a preschool experience survey in kindergarten registration materials (previously the legislation read “may”).
- **Sec. 8** - Delays the requirement for state-funded early care and education programs to meet staff qualifications (50% of Qualified Staff Members to hold a bachelor’s degree and 50% to hold an associate’s degree) from July 1, 2015 to July 1, 2017.
- **Sec. 8** - Grandfathers those teachers who hold an associate’s degree and at least 12 credits in early childhood or child development who have been employed in the same state-funded program since 1995 from stricter staff qualification requirements until June 30, 2025.

Public Act 15-96 – An Act Prohibiting Out-Of-School Suspensions and Expulsion for Students in Preschool and Grades Kindergarten to Grade Two – *Effective July 1, 2015*

Sec. 4 of this act applies to preschool programs operated under a local or regional board of education, state or local charter school, or magnet school. The bill states that no preschool program provider, as defined above, shall expel any child, except an expulsion hearing shall be conducted whenever there is reason to believe that the child was in possession of a firearm on or off school grounds or at a preschool program-sponsored event. The child shall be expelled for one calendar year if it is determined that the child did possess a firearm. A preschool program provider may modify the period of expulsion for a child on a case-by-case basis. The bill also states that a preschool program provider, as defined above, may only authorize an in-school suspension.

Public Act 15-161 - An Act Concerning Notification by Law Enforcement Agencies to Day Care Centers – *Effective October 1, 2015*

This act requires (1) child care centers and family child care home providers to submit contact information to the local police department or state police troop, and (2) the local police department or state police troop to notify child care centers of emergency conditions near such child care home or center that may endanger the safety and welfare of the children.

Public Act 15-157 - An Act Concerning Developmental Screenings for Children – *Effective July 1, 2015*

This act requires authorized health care providers to indicate on the SDE early childhood health assessment record form or the health assessment form (yellow form) whether a developmental screening was conducted. "Developmental screening" means a screening using a method recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics to identify concerns regarding a child's physical and mental development, including, but not limited to, the child's sensory, behavioral, motor, language, social, perceptual or emotional skills. Licensed child care providers should be aware that this information must be provided on the child health assessment forms maintained for all enrolled children.

Public Act 15-174 - An Act Concerning Childhood Vaccinations – *Effective July 1, 2015*

This act states when a parent or guardian objects to an immunization on religious grounds, such objection must be accompanied by a statement from the parents or guardian that the immunization would be contrary to the religious belief of the child or the parents or guardian. The statement must be acknowledged by A) a judge of a court of record or a family support magistrate, (B) a clerk or deputy clerk of a court having a seal, (C) a town clerk, (D) a notary public, (E) a justice of the peace, or (F) an attorney admitted to the bar of this state. The statement must be updated annually.

Public Act 15-39 - An Act Concerning Infant Safe Sleep Practices – Effective October 1, 2015

This act requires hospitals, through their maternity programs, to provide parents or legal guardians of newborns written information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about safe sleep practices.

Public Act 242 – An Act Concerning Various Revisions to the Public Health Statutes – Effective October 1, 2015

Sec. 69 – Requires the Department of Housing, in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the State Department of Education, to make available information on trauma-informed care and related services for homeless children and youths to homeless shelter providers in the state that receive financial assistance from the Department of Housing. Such homeless shelter providers shall, to the extent feasible, (1) refer homeless children or youth to such services as necessary, and (2) make efforts to ensure that such homeless children or youths have access to such services.

Public Act 15-45 - An Act Establishing a Home Visitation Program Consortium – Effective July 1, 2015

This act establishes a Home Visitation Program Consortium of up to 25 members that shall (1) advise the Office of Early Childhood, Department of Children and Families and Department of Developmental Services regarding the implementation of the recommendations in the Home Visiting report for the coordination of home visitation programs within the early childhood system, and (2) ensure the continued collaboration of home visitation programs in order to improve the services offered to vulnerable families with young children. The Consortium must submit a report by September 15, 2016 to the Children’s Committee regarding the status of implementation of the home visiting plan, the level of collaboration among home visiting programs, and any recommendation for improvements. The Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood, or designee, is designated as member of the Consortium. The Office of Early Childhood will staff this Consortium.

Public Act 15-27 - An Act Concerning the Implementation of a Comprehensive Children's Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Health Plan – Effective July 1, 2015

This act establishes the 34-member Children's Behavioral Health Plan Implementation Advisory Board. The board shall (1) advise on the execution on the behavioral health plan developed by the Department of Children and Families, (2) catalogue the mental, emotional and behavioral health services for families; (3) adopt standard definitions and measurements for the services delivered, and (4) foster collaboration among agencies and stakeholders in order to prevent or reduce the long-term negative impact of mental, emotional and behavioral health issues on children. The board must submit a report by September 15, 2016 to the Children’s Committee and annual thereafter detailing the status of the implementation plan, level of collaboration among entities, and recommendations in the collaboration among home visiting programs. The

Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood, or designee, is designated as a member of the board.

Special Act 15-10 – An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study the State-Wide Response to Family Violence – Effective July 1, 2015

This act establishes a task force to study the state-wide response to minors exposed to family violence. Such study shall include, but not be limited to, (1) an examination of existing policies and procedures used by the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, health care professionals, law enforcement, guardians ad litem, attorneys for minor children and the Judicial Branch for minors who are exposed to family violence, and (2) the development of a state-wide model policy for use by such entities. By January 15, 2016, the task force shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the Human Services and Children’s Committees. The task force shall terminate on the date that it submits the report or January 15, 2016, whichever is later. A representative from the Office of Early Childhood is designated as a member of the task force.

Public Act 15-221 - An Act Concerning the Protection of Particularly Vulnerable Children – Effective from passage

This act requires the child fatality review panel to conduct a study regarding the current policies, practice and procedures used to protect children birth to age three in the state from unexpected death or critical injury. The panel shall submit a report by October 1, 2016 to the Children’s and Education Committees with recommendations for any administrative or legislative action necessary to better protect children. The Office of the Child Advocate, in consultation with the child fatality review panel, shall conduct a study regarding the causes and rates of child fatalities in the state. The Office of the Child Advocate shall submit a report by July 1, 2016 to the Children’s and Education Committees regarding the causes and rates of child fatalities in Connecticut. Not more than 60 days after the submission of the report, the Children’s and Education Committees shall hold a joint public forum regarding the causes and rates of child fatalities in Connecticut.

Public Act 15-143 – An Act Concerning the Legislative Commissioner’s Recommendations for Technical Revisions to the Education and Early Childhood Statutes – Effective from passage

This is a technical act that modifies several early childhood statutes governing local school readiness councils, child care providers, the Office of Early Childhood, child abuse protection, and the early childhood information system.