



**Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program
General Policy A-05**

Requirements for Conducting Research Involving OEC Funded Programs

Issued July 2016; Revised January 2023

- OEC Child Day Care Contractors
- OEC Competitive School Readiness Municipalities
- OEC Priority School Readiness Districts
- OEC State Head Start Supplement
- OEC Smart Start

Definitions

Institutional Review Board (IRB): A committee established under federal auspices that has responsibility and authority to review research activities involving human subjects and/or their personally identifiable information (PII) in order to protect the rights and welfare of participants.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII): Information that uniquely identifies an individual when considered individually, or in combination with other information including but not necessarily limited to, name, address, account numbers, date of birth, biometrics, other unique identifying numbers, characteristics, or codes.

Program Evaluation: An assessment of the effectiveness of a program or service.

Research: A systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge¹.

¹ HHS.gov

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) understands the importance of high quality research to improve the field of early care and education. Such research may involve children or families whose services are funded in part or in full through the OEC. Researchers may request access to general early care and education programs and/or children and families enrolled in these programs. The OEC is committed to the protection of all families, staff, and children served in programs funded by the OEC.

Policy

This policy covers all research conducted in early care and education programs which are funded in full or in part by the OEC.

When a program is invited to promote or participate in a research study involving families, children, or staff; or



is asked to provide any information regarding families, children, or staff for research purposes, the program

must request confirmation that this research has been reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). The person conducting the research must provide: (1) the name of the IRB, (2) the study's IRB number, (3) the IRB review outcome, and (4) research approval start and end dates. These four factors in combination support a program's ability to consider participation in the IRB-reviewed research. No research-related activities may begin without these four facts having been provided to the program director by the researcher. This applies to all researchers including OEC employees, contractors, and non-OEC researchers (e.g., university faculty, staff, students).

Most large educational and medical institutions have their own IRBs which are responsible for reviewing research involving human subjects proposed by their faculty, providers, and students. The IRB assigns a number to the proposal and applies federal criteria to determine the need for IRB approval. Some studies will be exempt from IRB review and will be notified as such. Those that require IRB review are examined for any risks that participants may encounter related to study participation. Once the IRB determines that associated risks have been sufficiently controlled or eliminated, a letter of approval is granted to the researcher.

Early care and education programs should always ask for proof of IRB approval or exemption prior to participating in or promoting any research activities that involve their program, staff, children, families, or their personal information. It is the researcher's responsibility to seek and obtain IRB approval. Unless you are the researcher, you do not need to file any IRB forms. Any researcher requesting that the program director distribute recruitment materials to staff or families or seeking access to people, Personally Identifiable Information (PII), Personal Health Information, or contact information should provide documentation of IRB approval or exemption, as well as a description of the recruitment and data collection protocols. Programs must also follow their own policies and procedures that are in place to safeguard PII.

Data Collection and Program Evaluation

OEC program management and oversight activities involve the collection of various types of information (e.g., for quality management or reporting purposes), including potentially PII related to staff and children. **When program staff or the OEC are the only users of this information, there is no need for IRB involvement.** Submission of data, reports, and documentation to OEC as required for ongoing program operations does not constitute research, and therefore does not require IRB involvement. If data is requested by researchers for use beyond your own program or the OEC, it will likely require IRB review.

There may be instances when the OEC or the state legislature requires research to evaluate the nature of OEC programs. These activities may be conducted by researchers outside of the OEC and may involve PII already collected by programs or the collection of new data. While these activities match the description of program evaluation activities, they are also considered research and require IRB review. Whenever appropriate the OEC will share information about any required research activities, including who is conducting the research and the status of the IRB review, with the programs involved. If programs have questions about this type of program evaluation activity, they should contact their OEC program manager.



OEC Letters of Support for Research Activities

The OEC is often asked to support grant applications or to endorse particular research projects. **OEC's letters of support or interest do not constitute IRB approval.** All requests for participation in research targeting programs, children, or families in your program must be reviewed by an IRB.

All research is voluntary. IRB approval does not obligate any program or individual to participate in research. Unless the data collection in question is required for OEC evaluation efforts (see "Program Evaluation and Data Collection") the program may decline to participate in or disseminate information about a particular research effort. If the program agrees to participate in advertising or engaging in a research study, that does not obligate any staff person, parent, or child to participate. If a parent agrees that their child may participate in a research activity, but the child demonstrates with words or behaviors that she or he does not want to participate, the child is not obligated to do so. Both parental consent and child assent should be sought. Such scenarios should be addressed in the IRB application protocol and discussed with the researcher before research activities begin.

More information about OEC support of high quality research may be found on the OEC website [Research with OEC](#) page.