



Connecticut Office of Early Childhood

At a Glance

Connecticut Office of Early Childhood

Beth Bye, Commissioner

Established – June 24, 2013, by Executive Order No. 35

Statutory Authority – Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 10-500 (P.A. 14-39 – An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education and Concerning Dyslexia and Special Education)

Central Office – 450 Columbus Boulevard, Floors 2 and 3, Hartford, CT 06103

Number of employees – 137 employees, 93 who are state funded and 44 who are federally funded.

Recurring operating expenses

State 245,989,934

Federal 278,324,010

Organizational Structure

- **Commissioner’s Office**
- **Division of Early Care and Education**
- **Division of Quality Improvement**
- **Division of Family Support**
- **Division of Licensing**
- **Legal Division**
- **Internal Operations and Support**

Mission

To partner with families of young children to advance equitable early childhood policies, funding and programs; support early learning and development; and strengthen the critical role of all families, providers, educators, and communities throughout a child's life. We will assertively remove barriers and build upon the strengths of historically disenfranchised people and communities to ensure fair access to OEC resources.

Vision

All young children in Connecticut are safe, healthy, learning and thriving. Each child is surrounded by a strong network of nurturing adults who deeply value the importance of the first years of a child's life and have the skills, knowledge, support and passion to meet the unique needs of every child.

Our Guiding Principles

- Intentionally frame our organization's policies, practices, and resources through the lens of advancing equity and anti-racism
- Partner with families and communities to create family-driven programs that honor diverse languages, values, strengths, and experiences
- Conduct our internal and external relationships to promote respect, collaboration, and team growth
- Inform decisions and policies by utilizing high quality inclusive research and data interpretation
- Deliver excellence and innovation in all aspects of agency work
- Foster an efficient, coordinated, caring and professional culture throughout the agency
- Value early childhood as a critical time of learning through play and positive social and emotional connections to promote optimal development of the whole child within their family and community
- Engage in continuous quality assessment to improve outcomes for children, families, and early childhood providers
- Advocate for funding and promote partnerships to support early childhood services
- Ensure equitable access and respect for parent choice within all early childhood services

Statutory Responsibility

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) was created through Executive Order No. 35, effective June 24, 2013, and statutorily established through Conn. Gen. Statute Sec. 10-500 (P.A. 14-39 – *An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education and Concerning Dyslexia and Special Education.*) As a cabinet-level state agency reporting directly to the Governor, the OEC is the lead agency for early care and

education, workforce development, program quality and improvement, child care licensing, and family support. The OEC consolidates the funding streams, programs, and personnel of numerous early childhood services formerly dispersed across the Departments of Education, Public Health, Social Services, Developmental Services, and the Board of Regents.

The Office of Early Childhood works to:

- Serve children and families through a two-generational approach
- Coordinate and improve the delivery of early childhood services for Connecticut children
- Ensure that child care and education programs for young children (1) are safe, healthy, and nurturing, (2) appropriately support children’s physical, social and emotional, and cognitive development, and (3) are accessible to all children, particularly those at greater educational risk (including those from families in poverty, families with a single parent, families with limited English proficiency, and parents with less than a high school diploma)
- Support families raising young children to ensure the children’s health, well-being and positive growth and development
- Build and support a high-quality early childhood workforce

OEC Operations and Divisions

Commissioner’s Office

The Commissioner’s Office assures that agency-wide administrative activities are coordinated and accomplished in an effective and efficient manner. The office provides the following services across the agency:

Internal Operations and Support (Fiscal Services and Grants and Contracts)

Fiscal staff manage the day-to- day financial functions, budgeting, reporting and year-end responsibilities for both state and federal funds. Other business operations include human resources, agency policies and procedures, internal and external audits, and contracts.

In 2020, the agency launched a Grants and Contracts Support Unit responsible for the development, execution, and maintenance of all Purchase of Service and Personal Service Agreements, and for tracking and ensuring programmatic compliance of all Memoranda of Understanding and Agreement. Rooted in Active Contract Administration and Management, the Unit is tasked with ensuring that staff at every level of the agency have the training and tools to effectively develop and monitor grants and contracts. In addition, the Unit will play a coordinating role and will provide support with responding to Requests for Proposals and grant opportunities for which the agency applies.

Communications

Communications responsibilities include public information, media relations, public affairs, website, social media, internal and external communications, and crisis and emergency risk communications.

Government and Community Relations

The Government and Community Relations arm of the OEC is responsible for legislative and policy information, including:

- Serving as the OEC commissioner's liaison to the General Assembly, Executive Branch, and congressional delegation
- Outreach to early childhood organizations to build communication and collaboration.
- Development and implementation of OEC legislative agenda
- Tracking and analysis of early childhood-related legislation
- Responding to legislative inquiries
- Preparing OEC legislative testimony and reports

Legal Office

Legal office staff are responsible for managing the day-to-day legal functions of the agency. Legal office attorneys assist the different divisions with advice regarding contracts, grant awards, program administration, discrimination complaints, audits, confidentiality requirements, ethics requirements, records retention, legislation, regulations, and other matters as they arise.

During FY 22, the OEC conducted 13,208 background checks for child care personnel statewide, in compliance with federal and state requirements for child health and safety. This year marked the launches of two key systems designed to enhance the speed and ease of background checks processing. The Connecticut Criminal History Request System (CCHRS), administered by the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), makes fingerprint check completion possible in days, rather than months. The Background Check Information System (BCIS), designed by OEC personnel for the management of child care background checks in Connecticut, enables child care providers to more actively manage their staff rosters and ensure compliance with background check requirements.

Use of LiveScan technology for electronic fingerprint capture and transmission has continued to increase. This increase has been of great benefit to child care providers, as LiveScan fingerprinting is fast and convenient, and has a much lower rate of rejection than traditional inked prints on paper cards. The increase in use of LiveScan fingerprinting has resulted in a dramatic drop in the overall fingerprint rejection rate (from 24% in FY 21 to 4% in FY 22), enabling child care personnel to spend less time obtaining reprints and more time caring for children. The OEC's partnership with United Way of Connecticut has been particularly beneficial in this area. During the first quarter of FY 22, 29% of child care fingerprints were

electronically submitted by United Way; by the fourth quarter of FY 22, 78% of child care fingerprints were electronically submitted by United Way.

Using multiple federal funding sources (including Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), ARPA, CARES), EC continued covering the \$88.25 per person criminal background check fingerprint processing fee during FY 22 and will continue covering those fees through the current fiscal year (FY 23, ending 6/30/23).

The professional and para-professional staff served as hearing officers in 52 Care 4 Kids child care subsidy hearings during FY 22. The attorneys also represented the agency in 53 child care licensing enforcement cases; most were resolved via voluntary surrender of license, negotiated corrective action plans, or consent orders, and two resulted in license hearings, with the paralegals serving as administrative staff in those hearings. In addition, staff responded to 45 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests during FY 22.

Research, Planning and Technology

The Research, Planning and Technology (RPT) Division was formed in 2021. The RPT division brings together strategic planning and information use needed to operate as a data-informed agency and to support agency operations and work. Data-driven decisions hinge on data specialists, technologists, and program specialists working together to solve problems and make policy. This division is led by the Chief Research and Planning Officer and includes research capacity, university research partners, and the IT division. The Chief Research and Planning Officer's role is to marshal the power of evidence and information to understand where and how OEC can best direct state and federal resources to young children, their families, and communities.

The division is composed of research and planning functions and the agency's technology division. On the research and planning side, agency data stewards and research specialists in this division support agency learning and training and engage closely with the Information Technology Team to improve data collection efforts and support new application development. The division partners internally and externally to provide expertise in performance measurement and management, strategic communications, and organizational change.

In addition to the support of the agency, the Chief Research and Planning Officer is engaged with data efforts across the state including the P20-WIN Network and the current IT Optimization effort. The division prioritizes opportunities for intra-agency and inter-agency data sharing and development, and enhancement of integrated data systems. This division seeks ways to make agency data open and transparent to several audiences including legislators, parents, providers, and the public.

The Information Technology section of the division works to improve data systems to increase the agency's ability to use data to inform and improve policy and administration. This work is rooted in common shared data models and a master data index across all divisions creating a single point of agreement among all agency data. The OEC continues to build IT and data service connections between state agencies to support real-time data inquiries. IT operations ensures that all OEC staff have secure and functioning computer and communications technology, along with the knowledge and support to make each individual OEC staff member effective in their work. The development team develops applications that securely collect, process, and give access to child and program data across OEC's divisions and to the public.

Head Start State Collaboration Office

Head Start Collaboration Offices (HSCOs), authorized by [Section 642B\(a\)\(2\)\(A\) of the Head Start Act](#), promote partnerships at the local, state, and national levels to strengthen services for the Head Start community and children whose families live in poverty. Appointed by the Governor, the Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSCO) Director facilitates state-level collaboration between Early Head and Head Start programs, state agencies, and partners to carry out activities designed to benefit income eligible pregnant women, children from birth to school entry, and their families. As Head Start is a critical component to CT's early childhood system, the HSCO Director supports the OEC's strategic planning and the implementation of statewide systemic efforts.

The work of the HSCO and the partnerships are intended to:

- Assist in building early childhood systems
- Provide access to comprehensive services and support for all children living in families with low-income
- Encourage widespread collaboration between Head Start programs and other appropriate programs, services, and initiatives
- Augment the Head Start program's capacity to be a partner in state initiatives on behalf of children and their families
- Facilitate the involvement of Head Start programs in state policies, plans, processes, and decisions affecting target populations and other families with low income

Parent Cabinet

The OEC Parent Cabinet was co-created with a group of parent leaders and the first-ever Cabinet were seated in September 2021. The role of the Parent Cabinet is to serve as a vehicle to elevate family voice and build connections among Connecticut families, communities, and the OEC. Through leadership opportunities, the Parent Cabinet raises up and incorporates the expertise of parents with young children throughout the OEC to strengthen family-centered policies and programs.

Division of Early Care and Education

The Division of Early Care and Education oversees and monitors state and federal grants, contracts and subsidies that support early care and education programs. The division is charged with ensuring the funds are administered efficiently and are used for the purposes intended. These funds include:

1. Child Day Care Contract Program
2. School Readiness Grant Program
3. Smart Start Grant Program
4. State Head Start Supplement Program
5. Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership
7. Child Care Development Fund (including Care 4 Kids Subsidy Program)

Child Day Care Program

Child Day Care programs provide early care and education to infants and toddlers, preschoolers and/or school age children who meet certain eligibility requirements, including incomes below 75% of the State Median Income (SMI). These programs are in towns and cities across Connecticut. Section 8-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) specifies that the purpose of this funding is for the development and operation of child day care centers for children disadvantaged by reasons of economic, social, or environmental conditions. The services provided through the Child Day Care contracts are supported with state funds. Enrollment and capacity in Child Day Care programs fluctuated throughout FY 22 due to number of factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic including, staffing shortages, local conditions, and family preferences. OEC worked to stabilize these critical programs with enhanced state payments to reduce the impact of low enrollment and help the program survive the pandemic fiscally. In person/on-site care remained a priority. However, programs that closed temporarily due to a COVID-19 exposure were able to offer remote learning to engage families. School Readiness and Child Day Care Programs were given the opportunity to seek waivers for hours of operation and days of closure to respond to the public health emergency and the associated workforce issues.

CHILD DAY CARE CONTRACT PROGRAM <u>\$35,131,696</u>	
Number of Communities	48
Number of Programs	47
Number of Sites	100
Sites that are also SR (43 PSR; 15 CSR)	58
Sites that are also SHS	17
Infant/Toddler Full-Time	1377
Infant/Toddler Wraparound	186
Preschool Full-Time	2122
Preschool Wraparound	297
School-Age Full-Time	203
School-Age Part-Time	163

School Readiness

School Readiness is a state-funded initiative that provides access to preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-old children. At least 60% of households served must have incomes under 75% of the State Medium Income (SMI). School Readiness is comprised of both Priority and Competitive Communities as defined in legislation and structured to:

- Promote the health and safety of children
- Provide opportunities for parents to choose among affordable and accredited programs
- Encourage coordination and cooperation among programs and services
- Recognize the specific service needs and unique resources available to particular municipalities; prevent or minimize the potential for developmental delays in children
- Enhance federally funded school readiness programs
- Strengthen the family through encouragement of parental involvement
- Reduce educational costs by decreasing the need for special education

Enrollment and capacity in School Readiness programs fluctuated throughout FY 22 due to a number of factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic, staffing shortages, local conditions, and family preferences. OEC worked to stabilize these critical programs with enhanced state payments to reduce the impact of low enrollment and help the program survive the pandemic fiscally. In person/on-site care remained a priority. However, programs that closed temporarily due to a COVID-19 exposure were able to offer remote learning to engage families. School Readiness and Child Day Care Programs were given the opportunity to seek waivers for hours of operation and days of closure to respond to the public health emergency and the associated workforce issues.

SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM			
TOTAL \$93,715,837			
SPACES \$90,636,564 ADMIN \$2,186,317 QE \$892,956			
	Priority	Competitive	Total
Number of Communities	21	46	67
Number of Programs	132	68	200
Number of Sites	22	82	304
Number of Children	10451	1458	11909
Full-Day Spaces	7056	685	7741
School-Day Spaces	2060	328	2388
Part-Day Spaces	879	445	1,324
Extended-Day Spaces	456	NA	456

Smart Start

Smart Start serves 3- and 4-year-old children in public school settings. It provides local and regional boards of education with funding to establish or expand a preschool program under the jurisdiction of the board of education for the town. Smart Start services are supported through state funds. In addition, supplementary funding available through ARPA funding was designated to support 16 additional classrooms for FY 22 and 23 through the “Smart Start for Recovery” grant. Enrollment in Smart Start programs rebounded from the acute phases of the pandemic with programs serving children at near capacity in FY 22. All services were provided in-person, except in cases when individual classrooms provided remote services during short-term classroom closures for periods of quarantine. Enrollment in the Smart Start for Recovery classrooms also increased over the course of the fiscal years as the classrooms began operations. One Smart Start for Recovery classroom was not able to begin operations in FY 22 due to staffing shortages but is ready to begin providing services in FY 23.

	SMART START \$3,250,000	SMART START FOR RECOVERY \$1,200,000 FOR OPERATIONS, \$800,000 FOR ONE-TIME CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS
Number of School Districts	23	10
Number of Classrooms	44	16
Children Served	650	240

CCDF/Care 4 Kids Subsidy Program

The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) is the primary federal funding for low-income families who are working or participating in education and training to help pay for child care. The Care 4 Kids subsidy program allows eligible families to select a provider anywhere in the state for care. The subsidy can cover full-time, part-time, quarter-time and summer care, based on the family's work schedule. Families earning up to 60% of the State Median Income (SMI) are eligible to enroll; at the 12-month redetermination, a family can earn up to 65% of SMI.

A combination of state and federal funds supports the Care 4 Kids subsidy program. In FY2022, 5,457 providers served 29,368 children. (Source ImpaCT Child Care Ad Hoc Report as of 08/01/2022).

State Head Start Supplement

Head Start is funded directly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to community providers that provide comprehensive child and family support services to low-income families with children ages 3 to 5 years old. Head Start serves approximately 6,000 children, and through the State Head Start Supplement, Connecticut provides supplemental funding to 11 of the 19 federally funded Head Start grantees to increase capacity by 320 preschool-aged children. These funds also extend the day/year of federally funded Head Start spaces and support quality enhancement activities in Head Start programs.

STATE HEAD START SERVICES	
\$5,083,238	
Number of Communities (14 Services & Innovative Enhancement funding options; 23 Innovative Enhancement funding option only)	28
Number of program sites	48
New Full day/full year Spaces Created (Services funding option) in 14 communities	264
Extended day/extended year Spaces (Innovative Enhancement option) in all Head Start programs	616

Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership

Early Head Start (EHS) is funded directly by the U.S. Department of HHS to community-based organizations to provide year-round comprehensive child and family support services to low-income pregnant women and families with children birth to 3 years old. EHS settings include

child care centers, family child homes and family home visiting. Three EHS CT grantees were awarded a federal grant to partner with home-based and center-based child care programs to provide comprehensive services based on the EHS model. The OEC provides state funds to support children in the three federally funded EHS-CC Grant Partnership Programs whose families are not eligible for the Care4Kids subsidy program.

EARLY HEAD START - CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP \$1,339,233	
Grantees	3
Number of Providers	44
Number of Children (Monthly Average)	222

Division of Quality Improvement

The Division of Quality Improvement is responsible for advancing quality by delivering technical assistance and support for the development of the workforce and early childhood services for young children in family child care homes, centers, and school-based programs. The division’s activities are unified through our emerging Quality Improvement System.

Quality Improvement System

The Office of Early Childhood launched the foundation for our quality improvement system in FY 22. The system is designed to bridge licensing standards to accreditation standards, including accreditation standards for family child care settings. The system focuses on simplicity, accessibility, and leveraging existing health, safety, and quality assurance systems. This system intends to reduce state overhead expenses, increase transparency and clarity for families, and offer a supportive structure for programs. In our system, we will not rate programs or classrooms, as many states do. Connecticut programs are licensed, and a portion of programs are accredited or moving toward accreditation.

To advance the design and development of the system, OEC entered into a [partnership agreement](#) with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The partnership helps ensure providers’ needs are met by planning data-informed systems and tools and integrating CT’s existing technical assistance and workforce supports as critical infrastructure for quality improvement. The systems and their connection to the Quality Improvement System are supported by Service Navigators, who have personal communication with providers who seek resources. Service Navigators, who are OEC or Staffed Family Child Care Network staff, use a series of questions to help providers identify needs and next steps in

their program improvement efforts. Service Navigators connect providers to resources including these areas of the work described below.

Accreditation Quality Improvement Supports provides access to a team of staff with expertise in continuous program improvement using the NAEYC assessment items as the framework for growth. AQIS supports are open to all child care providers interested in quality improvement, whether the program is actively pursuing or maintaining NAEYC Accreditation.

Staffed Family Child Care Networks and a Statewide Hub offer family child care providers opportunities to network, learn together, and access community resources. Networks provide coaching and consultation (by phone, email and in person), professional development, and networking through regularly scheduled network meetings. Providers also have access to health consultation provided by nurse consultants and behavioral health experts from the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP). During FY 22, the OEC successfully implemented a Request for Proposal for a Statewide Hub to serve as the convenor and infrastructure for the regional networks throughout the state. The United Way of CT is the successful recipient of the award and the new Hub for SFCCNs.

Business Supports are offered through a partnership with Women's Business Development Council (WBDC) to provide short- and long-term support to build the health of child care businesses. Offering training, one-to-one advising, grants and business funding, these services address the fragile business-side of practices that are less-frequently the subject of training or preparation in the early care and education field. WBDC helps providers to strengthen their business practices, enabling expansion, sustainability, and financial security for all types of early childhood programs. WBDC also serves in a review and advisory capacity for the OEC to streamline business related training and technical assistance to providers across OEC contracts.

Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Resources support programs, families, providers, and communities to help young children grow and learn. Through using a cycle of intentional teaching children's learning and development is supported in a purposeful manner based upon each child's unique needs and interests. The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) provide common language around what children from birth to age five should know and be able to do. Instruction and assessment are composed of planning experiences to support children's development, gathering information about how they are progressing, and adjusting what is being done to support them based upon this information. During FY 22, there was an increased focus to support dual language learners and trainings were offered in Spanish and English. In addition, training on the CT ELDS specifically designed for family child care providers piloted in FY 21 was rolled out to the Staffed Family Child Care Network staff.

Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Registry unit staff code professional development qualifications, administer scholarship funds and education attainment incentive payments, process licensing Head Teacher, ECTC and Technical Assistance Provider applications, provide career counseling, advise on program requirements, and other functions to support individuals and programs. Participation in the Registry is required for OEC-funded programs. Data from the Registry is used to track participation and impact of OEC workforce activities and requirements, develop projections for new initiatives, and report Connecticut's workforce data nationally.

Early Childhood Workforce Professional Development activities address systems, policies, and practices to support the goal of developing a highly qualified and effective workforce for all children birth to age five. Collaborative partners include higher education institutions, professional development providers, and members of the early childhood workforce. The Office of Early Childhood is working closely with our higher education partners through two efforts: 1) our Lab School Investments Initiative to ensure the sustainability of Lab Schools as a delivery mechanism for early childhood services, and (2) to ensure students in early childhood higher education have high quality accredited labs in which to learn their profession. The Lab School Initiative will also ensure that there is strong alignment between Lab School implementation and OEC's Core Knowledge and Competencies, Early Learning and Development Standards, and other resources for teaching young children. Additionally, OEC's Higher Education Accreditation Support Initiative delivers supports to the early childhood academic programs to engage in Higher Ed accreditation, to support the developing workforce in their learning and to continue to advance the pipeline of new staff.

The Quality Improvement System is linking providers to these services via Service Navigators. Service Navigation is a human connection – a personal point of contact – to help link providers to OEC-sponsored programs and services that already exist. Over the coming year, our system will launch its branding and a set of tools for providers to use to identify strengths and opportunities for professional growth.

Technical Assistance and Quality Assurance support early childhood settings with training, coaching, and consultation. The OEC funded work to learn about what technical assistance providers need for their own professional learning, the development of quality assurance criteria, and to provide coaching learning communities for new technical assistance providers to enhance their skills. Supports for technical assistance providers will continue in the next contract cycle.

Division of Family Supports

The Division of Family Supports administers state and federally funded initiatives to:

- Strengthen the capacity of families to meet the developmental and health related needs of their infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities, and
- Prevent child abuse and neglect by helping families and communities be responsive to children, ensuring their positive growth and development.

These efforts include contracting with a broad range of organizations to implement evidence-based programs with families and their children; collaborate with community stakeholders; fund and support innovations in the field; and conduct research to assess the effectiveness of programs and develop strategies for improvement.

Connecticut Birth to Three System

Birth to Three supports families in enhancing their child's development and connecting to their communities when infants and toddlers have significant developmental delays or disabilities. Family and other caregivers receive coaching during everyday activities with their child to address priority outcomes that the family has identified. All children referred to Birth to Three are evaluated in five developmental areas. Eligible children who are 16 months old or older are also screened for autism. The family of an eligible child is offered an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) that is tailored to address the family's priorities, resources and concerns and the child's development. In FY 22, 19 agencies supported families in all 169 municipalities in Connecticut. On any given day, the families of approximately 6,255 children had IFSPs and over the course of FY 22 the families of 12,634 eligible children received supports from Birth to Three.

During FY 22, the Connecticut Birth to Three system supported families through Remote Early Intervention (EI) and through in-person Early Intervention. Remote EI provided Early Interventionists the option to support families remotely in the event of illness or the family's request. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, this option provided families who had been exposed to the COVID-19 virus an option for Early Intervention during quarantine, which otherwise would not be available. This led to fewer support disruptions for the children enrolled in the Birth to Three system. Moving forward, Remote EI will be an option in instances of illness or family requests to deliver support to families.

Home Visiting Programs

Home visiting provides voluntary, evidenced-based home-based supports to at-risk parents, both prenatal and with young children. The goal is to promote positive parenting, improve maternal and child physical and socio-emotional health, and promote optimal child development. The OEC administers 18 state and federally funded evidence-based home visiting programs:

- State Funded: CT Home Visiting System includes five evidence-based home visiting models; Parents as Teachers, Child First, Nurse Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, and Early Head Start.
- Federally Funded: Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) grant program includes five models: Child First, Early Head Start, Nurse Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, and Parents as Teachers.

Throughout FY 22, the CT Home Visiting system provided support to families in a hybrid fashion utilizing various virtual platforms to reach families in conjunction with in-person visits. This hybrid approach created a supportive system for families and reduced disruption to services when there was illness such as COVID-19 in the home or variations in a family daily schedule. This hybrid option will continue. The OEC will work with national model offices to work toward Home Visiting Guidance for best practices in hybrid in-person/virtual home visiting.

Help Me Grow

Help Me Grow is a program for children up to age 5 experiencing the challenges of growing up. It provides parents and providers access to a variety of community resources that address a child's behavioral or developmental needs. Help Me Grow also provides access to child development monitoring through the Ages and Stages and Ages and Stages- Social Emotional screenings. This year, Help Me Grow is piloting joint regional meetings with Department of Public Health's Connecticut Medical Home Initiative. These meeting will convene early childhood and childhood stakeholders in collaborative opportunities that focus on children's medical, behavioral and development needs.

Even Start Literacy Program

Even Start is a program that gives families access to the training and support they need to create a literate home environment and to enhance the academic achievement of their children. Five primary components are integrated to create a comprehensive program, with all families participating in all components. Local programs build on existing community resources to offer educational and support services to help parents and children learn and succeed together. The following are the five components: 1) Early Childhood and/or School-Age Education; 2) Adult Education; 3) Parents and Children Learning Together (PACT); 4) Parent Education and Support; and 5) Home Visits to Support Educational Programs.

EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM	
\$295,350	
Grantees	3
Number of Families	39
Number of Adults	44
Number of Children	50

The Division of Family Supports also supports training:

- Mind Over Mood Initiative (MoMs): Specialized Therapist Partnership Network, Integrated Model of Home-Based Psychotherapy, Training and Consultation to Home Visiting Program Sites.

The division supports training of community providers to address maternal depression via in-home supports that are paid for by Medicaid and some commercial insurance. This year, Mind Over Mood is focusing on increasing the number of bilingual therapists able to provide cognitive behavioral therapy to Spanish-speaking families throughout the state.

- Family Development Training and Credentialing

This model teaches students and human service providers a strength-based approach to working with families and communities. In collaboration with the University of Connecticut Center for the Study of Culture, Health and Human Development, the OEC provides this training to help families build skills needed to attain healthy self-reliance.

- Touchpoints™

Touchpoints™ is a registered training program from the Brazelton Center. This model builds on provider experience and education to enhance practice and service delivery.

Division of Licensing

The Division of Licensing administers the Child Care Licensing and Youth Camp Licensing Programs. Licensed settings include family child care homes, group child care homes, child care centers and youth camps. The child care licensing specialists and supervisors, nurses, health program staff, administrative and support staff assure that licensed child care facilities and youth camps operate at or above the required standards established by state statutes and regulations. This is accomplished through technical assistance, application processing, facility monitoring, complaint investigation and enforcement activities. The Division licenses more than 4,000 child care facilities and youth camps.

Improvements/Achievements 2021-2022

OEC COVID-19 Response

The OEC recognizes the important role providers of early childhood services played during the COVID-19 public health emergency. During this pandemic, OEC remained committed to ensuring that the indispensable functions of the agency continued so that children and families were appropriately supported and maintained access to the resources they need. To that end, the agency took actions to stabilize the early childhood field through CTCARES relief programs, and initiatives funded by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Connecticut received \$70 million in CRRSAA funding to provide 1) direct child care services, 2) resources, supplies, and/or technical assistance, and 3) stabilization grants to support increased operating expenses. That was followed by \$276 million from ARPA funds, of which \$170 million is targeted to stabilize the child care industry and \$106 million to expand child care assistance.

The OEC's COVID work in FY 22 transitioned to recovery and strengthening of the early childhood field. The OEC linked programs and spending to larger agency strategic goals around increasing access to early care and education, creating an equitable early childhood system, increasing stability in the field, investing in the early care and education workforce, and focusing on an outcomes-orientated approach. Many of the COVID recovery investments meet or support multiple of these strategic priorities. Below are some examples of investments over the past fiscal year that aim to strengthen and/or stabilize the field.

During the pandemic, families found it challenging to access and pay for child care, even when the need was exacerbated. OEC's relief efforts to increase access to quality early care and education include:

- **Expanding eligibility to Care 4 Kids:** Legislation expanded eligibility categories to include higher education, workforce training, and adult education, and temporarily increasing eligibility to 60% of SMI (up from 50%)
- **Expanding access to Smart Start:** Smart Start program offerings were made available to increase access to quality preschool programs in school districts in high-needs areas based upon the most recent Unmet Needs Report. Smart Start funding provided funding as an incentive for school districts to increase the number of preschool classrooms, thereby increasing access to high quality early learning environments in child care desert areas.
- **Supporting access to resources:** Outreach was increased to promote the Sparkler app to help families navigate child development resources and increase access to technology and training.

- **Enhancing social-emotional and mental health supports:** Funding was provided to expand Pyramid and Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP) support and training to providers to address children’s behavioral health challenges

Ongoing COVID recovery efforts also support child care programs by reducing expenses, supporting quality, and investing to recruit and retain the workforce, including:

- Covering the cost of fingerprinting and background checks for new provider staff to ease the cost of hiring and retention
- Paying accreditation fees for providers to ease the burden of National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and National Association for Family Child Care (NAFFC) accreditation, each of which is a step in the direction of higher quality child care for families and children in Connecticut
- Providing scholarship funds to early care and education providers to support educational mobility amongst staff
- Supporting the development and training of Lab Schools to create a stronger workforce pipeline into Early Care and Education
- Developing a public relations campaign and supporting workforce pipeline pilots to address current workforce shortages through recruitment and on-the-job training

State Funded School Readiness and Child Care Stabilization

The OEC provided the following to support OEC-funded programs: programs with enrollment below their fully funded capacity, a 25% operational expense provided for 9 months, with full allocations paid for 3 months. OEC provided supplemental administration funds for School Readiness programs to support monitoring practices and provided the Summer Family Fee replacement and Summer Activity fees. In response to the challenges regarding the early childhood workforce, the OEC offered programs the opportunity to seek temporary waivers to their operating schedules to reduce staffing hours.

Child Care Program Stabilization Grant Funding

In FY 21, the OEC was the first agency in the country to incorporate the [CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index](#) (SVI) into its distribution of approximately \$108 million of ARPA Child Care Stabilization funds. The SVI takes into account 15 different variables about the demographics, income, and living conditions of residents of a community, giving each census tract a score from 0 to 1 that is relative only to Connecticut communities. Using this index, OEC directed additional funds to programs located in historically marginalized communities, which are also disproportionately likely to be child care deserts.

This data-centered approach has resulted in OEC directing significant additional funding per child to providers that are:

- Located in census tract with majority people of color residents

- Owned and operated by people of color
- Owned and operated by monolingual Spanish speakers
- Located in the communities with the highest SVI scores >.8

In FY 22, the OEC continued to distribute relief funds with the goal of stabilizing and strengthening the field with targeted efforts that address some of the key challenges facing providers across Connecticut. Specifically, the OEC distributed \$88,000 to 41 family child care (FCC) providers to recognize FCCs that went above and beyond during the pandemic, extending their child care hours and supporting non-traditional working hours for families. The OEC also distributed approximately \$13 million in additional payments to providers that had applied for the initial round of relief funding back in FY 21. These funds were used for a variety of goods and activities including, but not limited to, supplies, staff bonuses, quality activities, transportation costs, and more.

To date, the OEC has distributed over \$120 million to over 2,500 child care providers. Nearly \$24 million is spent directly on increasing the compensation of early educators. Connecticut was one of the first states in the country to get this funding out to the field and continues to be recognized as a national leader in distributing funds that advance equity and takes into account the varying situations of child care providers. The OEC has participated in regional and national webinars about their funding approach and has shared learnings and impact with states across the country.

Governor’s Education Emergency Relief (GEER)

In 2020, the Office of Early Childhood was awarded \$4 million from the Governor's Education Emergency Relief Fund to implement *GEER Up for Learning*. The project offers equitable access to technology resources to at risk Connecticut families with young children – families who have limited access to remote learning technology and resources.

Through GEER, Phase 1, children who receive services through Birth to Three, Home Visiting, Early Care and Education, and Family Child Care have been provided access to virtual learning experiences via distribution of iPads and Hotspots. With the devices, these children have been able to access online learning experiences when unable to attend educational services in person. By providing equitable access to connectivity, GEER was able to meet a unique and critical need during the pandemic. While addressing this emergent need, GEER addressed longstanding inequities relative to access to the internet and its online resources.

During GEER Phase 1, OEC distributed and supported the use of nearly 2,000 iPads by families for use with and for their young children. In so doing, OEC collaborated with the Regional Educational Service Centers Alliance, the Connecticut Institution for the Blind, and All Our Kin to provide technical support to families in the use of the devices.

At the end of September 2021, Phase 2 of GEER *Up for Learning* began. Currently, GEER has distributed 2,600 iPads to programs for use by their families with and for their young children. During this second phase of the project, we are progressing from an emergent situation in response to a pandemic to a proactive approach that is putting in place sustainable resources to support families in the use of technology to support their children's education. To that end the GEER Online Learning Hub is being established. The goal is to create a centralized access point for in-person and online learning opportunities, the Parent Academy, and networking opportunities designed to support families in the educational use of technology.

The following resources are being developed, promoted, and delivered to families on a statewide basis via GEER's Online Learning Hub.

- **Tech-to-Go Tutorials** - short, 15-minute, digestible opportunities for learners to close technology skills gaps and/or to troubleshoot challenges they may be encountering while using their devices
- **Pint-Sized PD Sessions** - a library of brief to the point learning modules devoted to a variety of technology-related topics
- **Parent Academy** – a networking opportunity aimed at empowering families to use technology with and for their children in safe and developmentally appropriate ways. The Parent Academy will include in person and online networking forums that will, among other things, utilize the various GEER resources being developed for that purpose

GEER is also providing early care and education providers access, for free, to the on-line version of Connecticut's Documentation & Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS). CT DOTS is a framework to guide early care and education providers in a process of monitoring children's progress on the skills, abilities, and behaviors articulated in Connecticut's Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS).

As Phase 2 continues, GEER's efforts will be directed at maintaining the system of distribution of the 2,600 iPads and Hotspots, continuing to develop new content for the GEER Online Learning Hub, and delivering in-person and online learning opportunities to families that support their use of technology to support their children's learning.

Care 4 Kids Parent Fees

Beginning in April 2021 and continuing through November 2021, federal funds were used to cover the cost of parent fees for parents with children enrolled in the Care 4 Kids program. This relieved the burden on working parents during the COVID pandemic.

Child Care Program Accreditation Fee Support

In partnership with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the OEC is funding NAEYC Accreditation fees for Connecticut early care and education programs for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021:

- a. Programs currently accredited by NAEYC, and
- b. Programs new to NAEYC Accreditation that are also currently under agreement with the OEC's Accreditation Quality Improvement Support (AQIS) project.

The initiative is funded by \$1.3 million from ARPA and CARES funds. The funds provide support for the initial cost of accreditation (\$1,600-\$2,800) or the annual renewal cost of \$550 - \$885.

Further recognizing the investment in quality markers and the value in reducing expenses to early childhood programs, the OEC is finalizing a contract that covers the period January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023, to cover all fees for any NAEYC Accreditation eligible program in Connecticut. The contract allows for reimbursement of paid fees as well as payment of fees going forward. The new accreditation fee, effective September 2022: (enrollment + application + candidacy) for a level 2 size program (61 to 120 children) is \$2,225; verification visit is \$1,200; and annual renewal is \$850.

Guidance and Outreach to Licensed Providers

The OEC continues to offer ongoing support, resources and guidance to child care and youth camp providers to protect the health and safety of children and staff throughout the COVID pandemic. Licensing staff continue to provide guidance regarding health and safety practices to licensed providers via mass emails, website updates, guides, onsite visits, etc.

COVID Website Section

The COVID-19 section of the website serves as the hub for information on OEC's Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding initiatives, policy memos, and guides focused on policies and guidance for center-based and family home-based providers; and frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Establishment of the OEC Parent Cabinet

Critical to ensuring that state systems and policies are efficient and effective for families, is the voice of parents who have maneuvered through and have either benefitted from or have been hindered by the process. The OEC recognizes that the voices of early childhood providers were many times driving the conversation of systems change, and that family voice needed to be more prevalent throughout its work and partnerships. Grounded in best practices of Head Start and 2Gen, the OEC engaged in a co-creation process with parent and community leaders to create the governance, structure, and implementation of the Parent Cabinet. Parent Cabinet members were selected after an extensive process resulting in 12 parents representing the regions of the DCF

map to align with OEC Home Visiting and Birth to Three programs, and three At-Large members. The first ever members were seated September 2021.

The Parent Cabinet has met monthly along with Commissioner Bye since January 2022. They have been focusing their initial efforts on building relationships with each other and the communities within each of their regions. A press event announcing the first CT OEC Parent Cabinet was held on April 7, 2022, during the national Week of the Young Child. Keynote Speakers included Commissioner Beth Bye (OEC), Commissioner Russell-Tucker (SDE), Elaine Zimmerman, Region I Administrator of Children & Families, and five Parent Cabinet Members.

Each month, the Parent Cabinet members conduct community outreach by attending community meetings, doing small group or 1 on 1's with individuals/families to share about their role and to hear the needs and wants of families. Many have connected with their local early childhood collaboratives or School Readiness councils along with the local parent ambassadors to be the conduit between local and state level. The Parent Cabinet members have been able to spread the news about OEC services for families such as Sparkler, 211 child care, Birth to Three and more. Some have also attended site visits with Commissioner Bye, testified at OEC press conferences, and participated in other state meetings such as the CT Council on Women and Girls to share their lived experiences.

Local Early Childhood Collaboratives

Local Early Childhood Councils (LECCs) were created with the purpose of convening their communities around early childhood issues to assure that all children have their developmental, health, and early learning needs met, and their families are engaged and supported as leaders. The CT Children's Collective, a statewide intermediary network, supports the strength and effectiveness of the Connecticut B-5 system through connecting Early Childhood collaboratives across the state and supporting them with training and technical assistance. The Office of Early Childhood continues to support both the LECCS and CT Children's Collective, recognizing and importance and power of local community and parent voice.

The agency supports the LECCS for the following activities:

- **Local Community Coordination** - Staffing to cover coordination activities, serve as the central point of contact in a community, develop relationships with community leaders and policy makers, provide outreach to families and partners, collect and share data, assist with child transition planning, coordinate and access resources, and share information.
- **Parent and Family Engagement and Leadership** - Staffing costs and Parent Ambassador stipends to support at least two local Parent Ambassadors to increase the role of family perspective, voice, and engagement in local decision-making and planning.

- **Data Collection and Analysis** - Support the distribution of OEC surveys such as the Parent Survey and others for statewide impact, and conduct local data collection activities such as surveys, focus groups, community cafes, etc.

The agency supports the CT Children’s Collective for the following activities:

- **Network Support** – Staffing and organizational costs associated with serving as the backbone organization to the CT Children’s Collective.
- **Communications** – monthly newsletter, email distribution lists, and website maintenance.
- **Data Collection and Analysis** - Aggregate data from across the LECC’s for statewide analysis and related action.
- **Family Engagement Consultation Support** – Increase and strengthen the work of the local early childhood councils in supporting the Parent Ambassadors at both the local and state level. Provide technical assistance to School Readiness Councils to better engage families and fill parent seats on the Councils.

Sparkler Mobile App

Sparkler is a mobile app-based service brought to Connecticut families by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. Sparkler mobile application helps families and early childhood educators monitor children’s development milestones and provides ideas to promote learning at home. Parents can download the Sparkler app to complete the Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE), answering questions about their child’s development and social emotional growth. Results of the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE indicate whether further evaluation is needed to determine if a child has a delay or disability and/or qualifies for intervention services such as Birth-to-Three or Pre-school Special Education.

Sparkler app includes the following features:

- ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE-2 evidence-based developmental and social-emotional screening tools
- Digital library containing over 1,000 play activities to promote child development
- Coaching by early childhood experts for families and community partners
- Information, resources, and referrals by accessing 2-1-1 Child Development/CT Help Me Grow

The OEC is currently working with 32 local communities, including home visiting programs, child care programs, family resource centers, Birth to Three programs, public schools, pediatricians, and others that work with the parents of young children. The Sparkler initiative includes staff trainings, technical support, materials, and other resources to share with local families.

The Office of Early Childhood completed a statewide roll out of the Sparkler application in October of 2021. This rollout raised awareness for the importance of developmental screening and to promote partnerships between families and early childhood educators. Sparkler Learning Inc., has partner with many early childhood providers and parents across the state. In doing so, Sparkler enrollment has increased from an estimated 1,800 to 10,000 since October 2022.

CT Head Start on Housing Initiative

A first in the nation effort, the Office of Early Childhood, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Department of Housing, National Center on Housing and Child Welfare, and the CT Head Start Association have partnered to provide direct access to permanent housing vouchers and services for Early Head Start and Head Start families experiencing homelessness.

In FY 22, the Connecticut Department of Housing committed 60 housing vouchers for families whose children are participating in CT's Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Five of those vouchers are specifically earmarked for Early Head Start MIECHV supported families. For sustainability, the Department of Housing has written into its administrative plan that going forward 1 out of every 3 Section 8 housing vouchers that turn over will go specifically to Head Start families.

This initiative builds upon the strengths and resources of each partner. For almost 60 years, Head Start has promoted the school readiness of infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children from low-income families, is free of charge, and offers high-quality comprehensive services that supports both the child and family. Head Start's model partners closely with families and provides in-depth case management to support them in reaching their goals. By working together, this partnership ensures families with young children have stable housing – a critical component to family well-being and healthy child development.

Pyramid Model

The Pyramid Model promotes young children's healthy social and emotional development and provides tools, strategies, and resources for teachers and caregivers to support children and families. Social emotional learning and development is fundamental to children's success in school and beyond, and its importance is understood now more than ever. The Connecticut Pyramid Partnership and OEC have worked to ensure that Pyramid resources are available for all, including those who may have experienced reduced social interaction and traumatic events during COVID-19.

This framework and resources can help guide programs and providers to think about what supports are in place for building social and emotional competence in young children. These focus on fostering responsive relationships and creating high quality, supportive environments

that are especially important at this time. This framework is aligned with the CT ELDS and the CT CKCs and can be used in conjunction with any SEL curriculum or on its own.

The comprehensive 18-hour, no-cost Pyramid Model training was attended virtually by over 500 early childhood caregivers. Additional resource videos developed by the CT Pyramid Partnership and CT Pyramid Model Program Coaches included:

- o Adult Self-Care/Managing Stress—2-Part Series – 110 trained
- o The Pyramid Model Alignment with the CT ELDS- 130 trained
- o The Pyramid Model Alignment with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework - 150 trained
- o Connecting with Families during COVID -175 trained

Connecticut was instrumental in the creation of the Spanish translation of *The Pyramid Model goes to Family Child Care* video and other training documents. Pyramid Overview training took place throughout the year with the Staffed Family Child Care Networks. A collaborative effort between the CT Pyramid Partnership and University of Connecticut University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UConn UCEDD) resulted in the generation of virtual and printed Pyramid Model resources shared with programs, teachers, family child care providers, and families. In addition, 10 of the Backpack Connection Series were translated into Portuguese. These briefs were developed by The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) as a method for parents/caregivers and teachers to work together on social emotional skills and reducing challenging behavior and are also available in many other languages on Challengingbehavior.org.

ECE Workforce Registry

Scholarship FY 22:

- \$1,482,924 awarded (\$1,309,464 – FY 21)
- 87 non-degree courses specifically to administrators of programs to meet licensing requirements and competency qualifications (130 – FY 21).
- Goals (Note: individuals typically receive multiple awards toward their goal each year):
 - o 35 associate degrees (36 – FY 21)
 - o 170 bachelor's degrees (155 – FY 21 and 80 – FY 20)
 - o 27 CDA credential work - credits toward 120 content hours (1 – FY 21)
 - o 16 CDA credential work – online non-credit instructor supported (18 – FY 21)
 - o 31 CDA credential fees (33 – FY 21):
 - 8 renewals (20 – FY 21)
 - 23 new (13 – FY 21): 13 Family Child Care settings (1 – FY 21); 3 Infant / Toddler Center settings (4 – FY 21); 7 Preschool Center settings (8 – FY 21)

- o 1 school-age Head Teacher Certificate (pursued 1 class; 4 individuals – FY 21)
- o 8 stand-alone (non-degree) business / NAFCC renewal courses for family child care providers
- o 15 Connecticut Director Credential fees (12 – FY 21)

Head Teacher:

- 452 awarded (371 – FY 21):
- 427 center settings (355 – FY 21); 2 center and group home settings (2 – FY 21); 23 group home settings (14 – FY 21)
- 245 Birth to Age 5 certificates (214 – FY 21); 143 Birth to School Age certificates (99 – FY 21); 64 School Age certificates (58 – FY 21)

Early Childhood Teacher Credential:

39 awarded (47 – FY 21)

- 3 Level A (associate degree) Infant/Toddler & Preschool Endorsement (3 – FY 21)
- 0 Level A (associate degree) Infant/Toddler Endorsement (1 – FY 21)
- 14 Level A (associate degree) Preschool Endorsement (17 – FY 21)
- 5 Level B (bachelor degree) Infant/Toddler & Preschool Endorsement (12 - FY 21)
- 1 Level B (bachelor degree) Infant/Toddler Endorsement (3 – FY 21)
- 16 Level B (bachelor degree) Preschool Endorsement (9 – FY 21)

The 39 were awarded based on the following qualification route:

- 8 Individual Review Route (7 – FY 21)
- 31 Traditional college degree route (38 – FY 21)

Licensing

The OEC made changes to the youth camp licensing regulations in accordance with the regulation making process outlined by section 4-168 of the Connecticut General Statutes. These changes became effective on June 13, 2022. The changes provide clarity to existing requirements, modify the requirements for certain staff, enhance requirements for the hiring of new staff, and modify requirements to be consistent with federal and state requirements. These changes are supportive of the operation of youth camps while also ensuring the safety, health and development of children receiving child care in such settings. These changes were fully implemented by giving notice to all licensed youth camps and offering technical assistance on the changes.

This past year, the OEC has continued to focus on translating many of its licensing materials and resources into Spanish.

Whole Family Approach –2Gen

Connecticut's [2Gen Initiative](#), structured as an advisory board with policy work groups, represents a diverse collaborative of executive, legislative, and judicial branch leaders; nonprofit and private sector partners; and parent leaders. Despite the continuing challenge of the pandemic, and the lack of a statewide coordinator to manage and guide the work for most of the year, the 2Gen Initiative advanced work to support family well-being. In July 2022, an Interim 2Gen Statewide Coordinator was hired, which will support the next stages of the 2Gen strategy. Below are the pertinent updates from FY21-22.

Parent Engagement

As required by C.G.S. [Sec. 17b-1121](#), 25% of the members of the 2Gen Advisory Board are parent leaders with lived experience of poverty. These parents received training on the 2Gen Initiative, state government, and legislative process, and now participate as equal members in high-level policy discussions. All parents are compensated for their engagement.

With the passage of Baby Bonds legislation, the parent working group identified the importance of bringing parent leadership and feedback to the roll out of the program. With support from private philanthropy, efforts began in January 2022 to work with the Office of the Treasurer to provide feedback on marketing strategy and materials, and to do outreach to parents to form a formal advisory, which will be finalized in the fall of 2022.

Over the past seven years, the Connecticut 2Gen Initiative has established a respected framework and infrastructure for parent engagement in state government. The framework was elevated this year to the regional level, with parent leaders supporting a regional learning community, offering insight and leadership to other states intent on engaging parents within state agencies.

Benefits Cliffs

The 2Gen Benefits Cliffs Work Group, formed in June 2019, has led statewide efforts to address [benefits cliffs](#) through data collection and analysis and development of policy solutions. These efforts have made Connecticut a national leader in this work. The 2Gen work group continues to provide support and guidance to Maine, Kentucky, Alabama, and other states as they pursue similar directions.

In summer 2020, the 2Gen work group in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (Atlanta Fed) created – at no cost to Connecticut – Connecticut's Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster (CLIFF). The [CT CLIFF](#) tool illustrates the interaction between wages, public benefits, and tax credits, and family economic stability. The CT CLIFF tool also demonstrates the significant taxpayer savings that result from career advancement.

In 2021-2022, the pilot to beta test the CT CLIFF tool was completed, and the University of Connecticut, with support from 2Gen parents, wrote and published the evaluation of the pilot. The results showed promise for the tool both as a career planner and to illustrate benefit changes due to employment. Based on these results, the 2Gen work group developed a plan to roll the CT CLIFF tool out statewide in partnership with the Governor's Workforce Council. Funding for this was assembled in the spring of 2022, and roll-out is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2022 to community organizations, public agencies, and others working with families.

At the regional level, Connecticut is engaged with other states to identify common policy challenges to mitigating the cliffs at the state and federal level.

Workforce

In summer 2022, the Governor signed into law changes to the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program that included increasing eligibility to 55% of the Federal Policy Line and other improvements. The 2Gen Workforce Work Group played a role in recommending these changes.

As transportation has continued to rise as a major issue for workers and families, the Workforce Work Group began exploring transportation options. The University of Connecticut augmented initial research with a more in-depth report on those options. Using this research, the Work Group is working with the Governor's Workforce Council and OWS to explore the possibility of a pilot to understand impact, costs, scale, and sustainability of strategies that support workers exiting training and in need of long-term transportation solutions.

Legislation mandates that by January 1, 2022, the Chief Workforce Officer must submit state workforce strategy recommendations to the Governor that include those advised by the 2Gen Advisory Board. The Work Group, in conjunction with the 2Gen Advisory, prioritized policy and practice changes related to workforce and 2Gen and submitted those to the Governor's Workforce Council in December 2022.

Regional and Federal Partnership

Connecticut is an active member of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) [Whole Family Approach to Jobs](#) public-private partnership across the six New England states.

Connecticut participated in the regional work groups on racial equity, parent engagement, and ARPA, formed in fall 2021. These regional work groups enabled Connecticut to bring a 2Gen lens to ARPA proposals, plans, and eventual implementation.