ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATUS OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT

STATE FISCAL YEAR 2022

Ned Lamont
Governor

Beth Bye
Commissioner

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.

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.

SECTION 1: FEDERAL AND STATE SUPPORT FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

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.

2021 CHILD DAY CARE CONTRACT PROGRAM - $35,131,696	
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	1,377
Infant/Toddler Wraparound	186
Preschool Full-Time	2,122
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 several 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.

2021 SCHOOL READINESS - 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	10,451	1,458	11,909
Full-Day Spaces	7,056	685	7,741
School-Day Spaces	2,060	328	2,388
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.

	2021 SMART START - $3,250,000	**2021 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.

2021 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

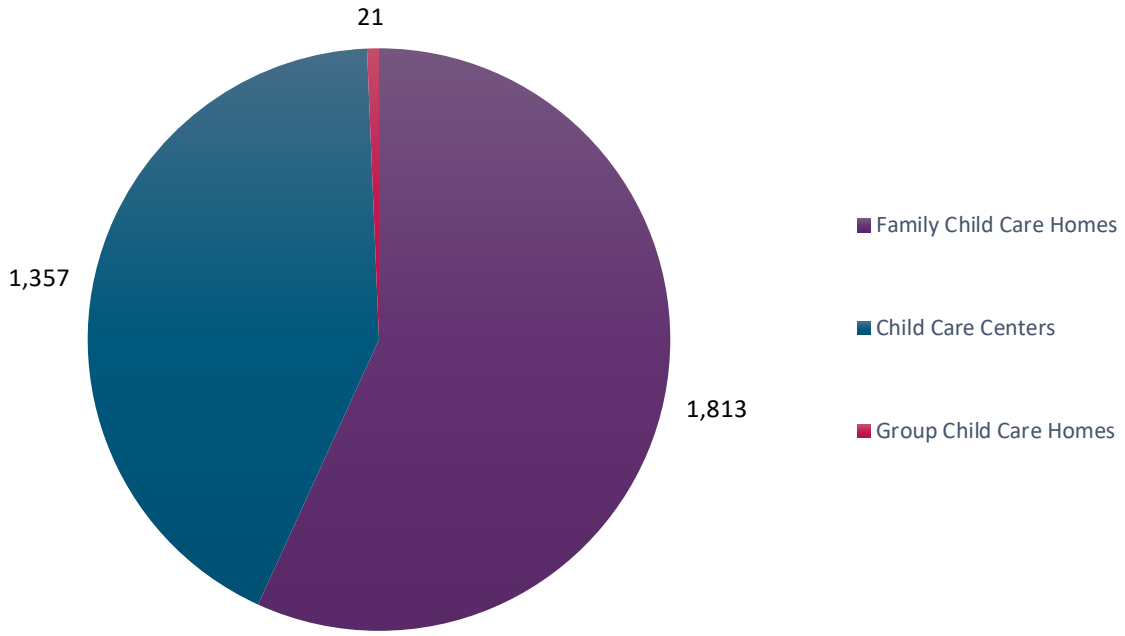
Early Head Start (EHS) is funded directly by the U.S. Department of HHS to community-based organizations to provide year-round comprehensive child and family support services to low-income pregnant women and families with children birth to 3 years old. EHS settings include child care centers, family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

2021 EARLY HEAD START - CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP - $1,339,233	
Grantees	3
Number of Providers	44
Number of Children (Monthly Average)	222

SECTION 2: EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION LICENSING

Licensing

There are approximately 3,292 licensed child care programs in Connecticut:



The licensing process includes enforcement to ensure compliance with the law and the regulations. Enforcement is critical for the delivery of quality, safe child care services. Connecticut's licensing regulations are among the most rigorous in the country. However, as stated by the federal Office of Child Care, strong licensing regulations, without a commitment to taking action when they are not met, do not meet the goal of protecting children from harm. Effectiveness in enforcement includes the following:

- A strong licensing statute that sets forth a range of enforcement options;
- Fair and uniform enforcement of rules;
- Sufficient qualified staff;
- Adequate funding; and
- Strong administrative support.

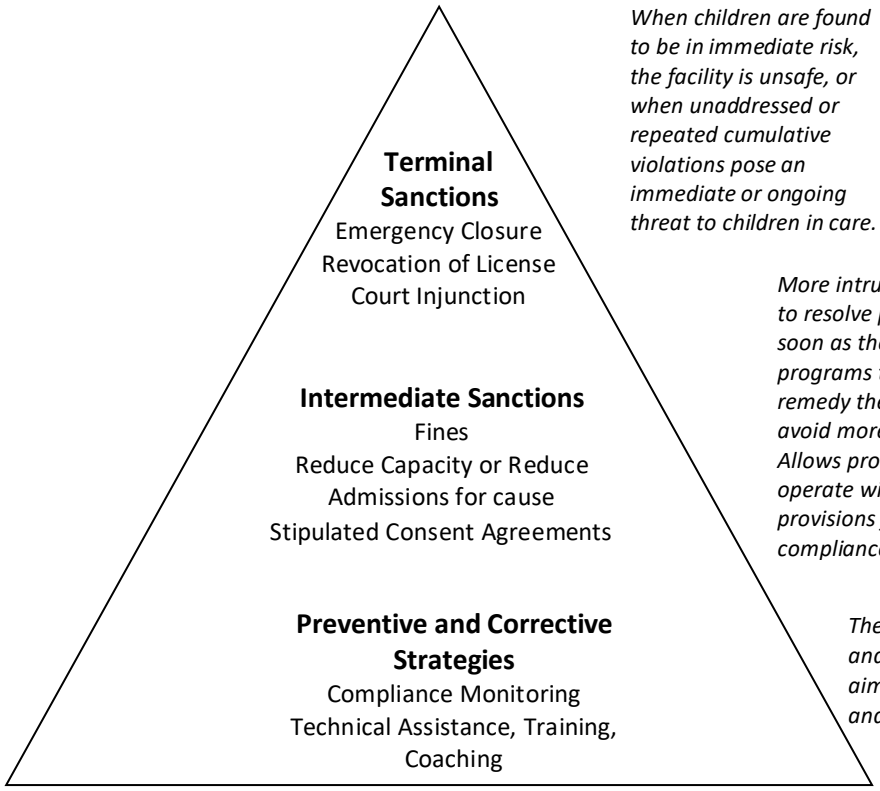
Types of Inspections

Types of Inspections	Family Child Care Homes Full, Unannounced Inspections	Child Care Centers Full, Unannounced Inspections	Group Child Care Homes Full, Unannounced Inspections	Total: All types of inspections (includes above types plus initials, partials, follow-ups, etc.)
2013	946	931	19	3,547
2014	1,131	1,173	16	4,339
2015	2,263	1,595	30	6,468
2016	2,266	1,876	37	7,220
2017	2,412	1,752	39	7,360
2018	2,018	1,593	27	8,097
2019	1,453	1,041	17	5,417
2020	490	331	4	4,286
2021	927	862	13	2,840

Licenses/Approvals

Initial Licenses/Approvals/Issued by Type	Family Child Care Homes	Child Care Centers	Group Child Care Homes	Family Child Care Staff-Assistant	Family Child Care Staff-Substitute
2013	202	61	0	59	154
2014	177	62	4	84	176
2015	161	57	3	66	213
2016	155	63	4	53	202
2017	115	44	2	37	169
2018	4	28	11	10	1
2019	142	57	1	60	208
2020	165	62	2	46	185
2021	134	39	4	49	171

Types of Enforcement Actions



When children are found to be in immediate risk, the facility is unsafe, or when unaddressed or repeated cumulative violations pose an immediate or ongoing threat to children in care.

More intrusive actions intended to resolve problems quickly as soon as they surface by giving programs the opportunity to remedy the noncompliance to avoid more restrictive sanctions. Allows providers to continue to operate with structured provisions for achieving full compliance with regulations.

The least intrusive preventative and corrective strategies that aim to help programs achieve and maintain compliance.

Enforcement Actions Taken	Fines	Consent Agreements (generally also includes a fine)	Voluntary Surrender of license (in lieu of the state filing charges) May occur after a summary suspension.	Revocation of license	Summary Suspension of license/approval (emergency closure)
2013	5	26	15	10	4
2014	6	24	10	13	4
2015	8	25	8	8	6
2016	9	33	7	29	4
2017	10	27	15	11	5
2018	8	33	12	12	0
2019	4	25	3	6	1
2020	2	27	4	3	1
2021	3	7	3	0	0

The need to take an enforcement action against a provider can also arise when a complaint is filed against the provider. All complaints are investigated, and those investigations are most often conducted by separate staff who are specifically assigned to investigate complaints. The most common types of

licensing complaints concern supervision, staff-child ratios, health/safety/cleanliness/nutrition, and discipline/behavior management. However, another significant type of complaint is if someone suspects that a program is operating illegally.

Number of complaints received (includes youth camps)

Enforcement Actions Taken	Fines	Consent agreements	Voluntary surrender of license	Revocation of license	Summary suspension of license/approval
2013	5	26	15	10	4
2014	6	24	10	13	4
2015	8	25	8	8	6
2016	9	33	7	29	4
2017	10	27	15	11	5
2018	8	33	12	12	0
2019	4	25	3	6	1
2020	2	27	4	3	1
2021	3	7	3	0	0

Complaints by setting and type

Note. Level 1 complaints involve suspected abuse/neglect.

Setting		Family Child Care Homes	Child Care Centers	Group Child Care Homes
2013	Level 1	43	141	1
	Level 2	116	287	8
2014	Level 1	60	167	3
	Level 2	98	297	4
2015	Level 1	53	162	0
	Level 2	91	330	2
2016	Level 1	45	187	0
	Level 2	94	406	4
2017	Level 1	50	195	2
	Level 2	96	365	4

2018	Level 1	44	188	0
	Level 2	91	459	2
2019	Level 1	34	148	3
	Level 2	88	417	2
2020	Level 1	25	80	1
	Level 2	52	275	1
2021	Level 1	32	146	0
	Level 2	62	485	5

SECTION 3: EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE

Workforce Registry

The Early Childhood Professional Registry is an information system that collects data on the demographics and education qualifications of the individuals who work in the early care and education field, as well as classroom-level staff assignment data for early care and education programs.

Using data in the user's account, individual and program level compliance is measured for state funded Qualified Staff Member (QSM) and Care4Kids health and safety orientation. Data is also used to assess the following: licensing Head Teacher, the Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC), the OEC scholarship assistance fund, and technical assistance provider approval. Access to free online training (including Care4Kids health and safety orientation training) is accessible via the user's account.

Participation is mandatory for the following populations:

- Staff who work in programs receiving School Readiness, Child Day Care, State Head Start, Smart Start, or Care4Kids; and
- Individuals applying for scholarships, licensing Head Teacher, and the ECTC.

Note. In FY18 an annual account renewal process was created; FY18 and FY19 numbers depict only renewed accounts. FY20+ numbers above depict account with activity within the year.

Workforce Registry	Total # Registry account holders
FY13	14,203
FY14	16,371
FY15	18,783
FY16	21,195
FY17	25,251
FY18	17,818
FY19	15,288
FY20	26,280
FY21	26,566
FY22	32,385

Scholarships

Between FY13 and FY22, a total of 26,565 scholarships were awarded. Award categories include credit tuition toward credential and degree attainment, exam fees, and books. Funds awarded total $10,635,201 over the last ten fiscal years.

Note. "Other" includes: School-Age Head teacher credit awards (2), Care4Kids Family child care provider non degree class awards (CDA renewal or NAFCC; 20), CDC (Connecticut Director Credential) fee awards (16)

Scholarships	Total # Awards	Leadership Credits	Pathways Exams	CDA/Equiv.	AA	BA	MA	Degree fees	Books	Other	Total $ Awarded
FY13	3,131	NA	94	33	453	668	68	327	1,070	418	$1,076,753
FY14	2,282	52	142	54	274	458	64	281	705	252	$708,240
FY15	3,750	63	86	92	390	910	60	753	1,238	158	$1,213,387
FY16	3,236	25	8	112	206	873	71	803	1,067	71	$1,085,940
FY17	1,830	8	1	132	83	516	NA	484	598	8	$865,760
FY18	1,554	54	5	58	80	767	NA	119	460	11	$720,870
FY19	2,092	75	7	178	74	922	NA	186	636	14	$957,425
FY20	2,491	70	5	104	162	629	NA	709	786	26	$1,211,576
FY21	2,863	146	1	60	106	734	NA	847	921	48	$1,312,326
FY22	3,336	69	2	84	108	858	NA	1,009	1,109	38	$1,482,924

Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC)

In 2013, Connecticut developed the Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC) for both the associate and bachelor-degree levels. The ECTC ensures common programs of study among approved institutions ensuring that all graduates have similar knowledge, skills and competencies. Using the NAEYC bachelor-level professional development standards, Connecticut created a state approval system for programs of

study not associated with public school certification. Participants can earn the ECTC through graduation from a college approved to offer the ECTC track, or by submitting materials for an individual review if graduating from a college that does not offer the ECTC track. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen increased interest in the Individual Review Route and have contracted with CT AEYC to manage the applications as part of OEC's quality improvement contracts. Data below is from the OEC's Early Childhood Professional Registry sorted to reflect the credentials awarded for the time period July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

Note. IT = Infant and Toddler; PS = Preschool; ITPS = Infant through Preschool; A level = Associate Degree Level; B level = Bachelor Degree Level

2021 Route		Individual Review Route	Approved College Route	**Total**
A Level	**IT**	0	0	17
	PS	0	15	
	ITPS	0	2	
B Level	**IT**	1	0	21
	PS	6	11	
	ITPS	1	2	
Total Approved		8	30	38

SECTION 4: EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION RESOURCE AND REFERRAL

2-1-1 Child Care is a free, confidential, and statewide service, funded by the state through United Way of Connecticut. This service helps match the requests of parents with child care providers and programs. Parents can contact 2-1-1 Child Care for resources and referrals to: licensed child care centers; family child care; before- and after-school programs; summer camps; nursery schools; nanny agencies; Head Start and Early Head Start; School Readiness programs; and play groups.

Child Care Referral Specialists help parents learn about options in their community and understand what to look for in finding a quality child care arrangement. In addition, Referral Specialists also help parents become connected to other resources such as Care 4 Kids or Birth to Three for families who may have concerns about their children's development.

FY2022	
211 Child Care Transactions	
Contact Center Transactions	39819
Web Search Engine	87,595
Web Resource Views	171,007
Professional Development	
Early Care Professionals Trainings	68
Early Care Professionals	914
On-site Family Child Care Tech Support Visits	24
Child Care Referrals	
Number of Infant	37,289
Number of School Age	20,046
Number of Preschool	18,624
Number of Toddler	14,051