



# CONNECTICUT Early Childhood

November 25, 2024

This year, the legislature passed a law<sup>1</sup> updating education requirements for Designated Qualified Staff Members (DQSMs) in **programs funded by School Readiness, Child Day Care contract, State Head Start Supplement, or Smart Start.**<sup>2</sup>

Some of the main changes in the law add options for working toward a degree in early childhood with supervision and update how the requirements phase in over time. These changes start **July 1, 2025**.

The new law mentioned above supports high quality early childhood experiences through teaching staff with early childhood education coursework and degrees.

**As the OEC creates full guidance by revising the General Policy (GP) A-01 and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), we are providing an update below to help you and your staff develop education plans.**

1. **The OEC will release updated policy guidance—called the General Policy (GP) A-01.** This policy will provide details on the requirements and updated guidance for teaching staff to be QSM eligible.

#### More to Come on These Updates



Virtual Sessions (tailored to program type) to hear from programs and answer questions



Updated guidance ("General Policy")  
Frequently Asked Questions

All materials and sessions will be available **in English and Spanish**

2. **The OEC provides debt-free, no student loan scholarship for degrees in early childhood education, as well as CDA credential assessment and one-time renewal fees.** These scholarships can support:
- Degree attainment: Getting an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood.
  - Degree progression: Moving from a CDA Credential to associate or bachelor's degree, but not the reverse.
- Individuals who hold degrees should not seek a CDA credential.

<sup>1</sup> Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10-16p is amended by [Public Act 24-78](#). The following document summarizes the legislation.

<sup>2</sup> Each classroom with children enrolled through Smart Start must be instructed by an individual who is an employee of the local board of education and holds certification pursuant to C.G.S. Sec. 10-145b, with a CSDE endorsement in early childhood education or early childhood special education.

Interested in a scholarship? [Learn more and apply here!](#) You can also [consult with a Registry Education Advisor](#) for information on how to plan your next steps.

#### Scholarships to Enroll in the 12 Defined Foundational ECE Credits

Starting **mid-May 2025**, the OEC will provide scholarships at partner colleges (CT State community college campuses, Charter Oak State College) for eligible providers to complete up to 12 defined foundational ECE credits:

- The 12 defined foundational credits are made up of four 3-credit early childhood specific college courses that the OEC has identified and aligned with the State Department of Education as the key competencies for teaching staff in early childhood programs. The courses are:
  1. Introduction to Early Childhood Education
  2. Child Development
  3. Health, Safety, and Nutrition (content combined into one ECE specific course)
  4. Child, Family and Community
- **Providers may be eligible if they have fewer than 12 early childhood college credits** to date (as verified in the Registry), even if they have a degree.

#### **3. The OEC continues to strongly encourage programs to actively support staff in achieving DQSM**

**requirements.** Teachers should review the guidance based on their current education in the tables below. Please note that these tables (one for centers, group homes, and license-exempt programs and one for family child care providers) provide guidance for providers and staff to act on as the General Policy is being updated. Additional guidance on DQSM qualifications is forthcoming.

For State Funded Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and License-exempt Programs		
A. CURRENT STAFF EDUCATION (I currently have or am working on...)	B. Meets DQSM July 1, 2025?	C. CAREER PATHWAY GUIDANCE
Have a bachelor's degree or higher in a field that is not early childhood AND <u>fewer</u> than 12 early childhood education (ECE) credits	Not Yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure your Registry account is updated with current transcripts.</li> <li>• Starting mid-May 2025, <a href="#">apply for an OEC scholarship</a> for the summer and fall semesters to pay for you to take up to 12 defined foundational ECE credits to meet QSM! See #2 above for more information</li> <li>• <b>Do not</b> enroll in a CDA (entry level, pre-degree) program since you already have a degree.</li> <li>• Work with a Registry Advisor for information on how to plan your next steps.</li> </ul>
Currently working in a planned program of study towards a <u>credit-based</u> CDA credential or degree in early childhood	Not Yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure your transcripts (and plan of study, if you are working toward your degree) are updated in your Registry account.</li> <li>• Work with a Registry Advisor for information on how to plan your next steps.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Apply for a scholarship through the Registry.</a></li> </ul>
Current CDA credential (from the Council for Professional Recognition)	Not Yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with a Registry Advisor to get on a degree pathway to achieve QSM status.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Apply for a scholarship through the Registry.</a></li> </ul>

For State Funded Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and License-exempt Programs		
A. CURRENT STAFF EDUCATION (I currently have or am working on...)	B. Meets DQSM July 1, 2025?	C. CAREER PATHWAY GUIDANCE
Currently working in a planned program of study towards a <u>non-credit (training hours)</u> CDA credential	Not Yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finish your planned program of study.</li> <li>Apply for an OEC scholarship for your CDA assessment fee.</li> <li>Earn your credential and then work with a Registry Advisor to get on a degree pathway to achieve QSM status.</li> <li><a href="#">Apply for a scholarship through the Registry.</a></li> </ul>
No college credit or fewer than 12 early childhood education (ECE) credits	Not Yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with a Registry Advisor to get on a degree pathway to achieve QSM status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If a degree isn't a fit for you right now, consider beginning by taking up to 12 defined foundational credits (see #2 above for more on the 12 credits).</li> </ul> </li> <li><a href="#">Apply for a scholarship through the Registry.</a></li> </ul>

For State Funded Family Child Care Programs		
A. CURRENT STAFF EDUCATION (I currently have or am working on...)	B. Meets DQSM July 1, 2025?	C. CAREER PATHWAY GUIDANCE
Some college credit or a degree in a field other than early childhood	Not Yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue an associate degree or higher in <u>early childhood education</u> to get on the pathway to DQSM.</li> <li>Work with a Registry Advisor for information on how to plan your next steps.</li> <li><a href="#">Apply for a scholarship through the Registry.</a></li> </ul>
Current CDA credential (from the Council for Professional Recognition)	Not Yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with a Registry Advisor to get on a degree pathway to achieve QSM status.</li> <li><a href="#">Apply for a scholarship through the Registry.</a></li> </ul>
Currently working in a planned program of study towards a <u>non-credit (training hours)</u> CDA credential	Not Yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finish your planned program of study.</li> <li>Apply for an OEC scholarship for your CDA assessment fee.</li> <li>Earn your credential and then work with a Registry Advisor to get on a degree pathway to achieve QSM status.</li> <li><a href="#">Apply for a scholarship through the Registry.</a></li> </ul>
Currently working in a planned program of study towards a <u>credit-based</u> CDA credential in early childhood	Not Yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure your transcripts (and plan of study, if you are working toward your degree) are updated in your Registry account.</li> <li>Work with a Registry Advisor for information on how to plan your next steps.</li> <li><a href="#">Apply for a scholarship through the Registry.</a></li> </ul>

#### Important Notes:

- All earned credits and degrees must be verified in the OEC Registry.
- Non-US degrees (and non-US high school diplomas for the CDA Credential) must have a NACES [member](#) equivalency report.

- Earned early childhood education credits are determined using the OEC's [Common Standard for Assessing Early Childhood Credits and Degrees](#).

Programs should advise staff and help them track progress through both individual and program-wide professional development plans. For additional information, see:

- [NAEYC Program Standards and Accreditation Assessment Items](#) – Standard 6 Topic Area D – Ongoing Professional Development; and
- [OEC licensing regulations](#) – Staffing 19a- 79-4a(g).

Thank you for your continued support of children and families, and please reach out to [OEC.statefunded@ct.gov](mailto:OEC.statefunded@ct.gov) should you have any more questions.

Sincerely,

Elena Trueworthy  
Acting Commissioner