STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Connecticut Office of Early Childhood

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Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program General Policy
C-01

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

TO: Mayors, Superintendents, School Readiness Council Chairs/Co-Chairs and Liaisons

FROM: Harriet Feldlaufer, Director
Early Care and Education
Office of Early Childhood (OEC)

SUBJECT: School Readiness Council Membership, Responsibilities, and the Role of the Liaison

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In order to satisfy the School Readiness Statute under Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) section 10-16r (a), local School Readiness Councils (SCRs) must be developed and include representatives from the following:

The chief elected official of the town or, in the case of a regional school district, the chief elected officials of the towns in the school district and the superintendent of schools for the school district shall jointly appoint and convene such council. Each school readiness council shall be composed of: (1) The chief elected official, or the official's designee; (2) the superintendent of schools, or a management level staff person as the superintendent's designee; (3) parents; (4) representatives from local programs such as Head Start, family resource centers, nonprofit and for-profit child day care centers, group day care homes, prekindergarten and nursery schools, and family day care home providers; (5) a representative from a health care provider in the community; and (6) other representatives from the community who provide services to children. The chief elected official shall designate the chairperson of the school readiness council.

SCRs may also consider the inclusion of local librarians as members of the SRC to assist in implementing the required collaborative agreement between local libraries and providers.

As outlined in the School Readiness Statute under C.G.S. section 10-16r (b), the local SRC shall:

1. Make recommendations to the chief elected official and the superintendent of schools on issues relating to School Readiness, including any applications for grants pursuant to sections 10-16p,10-16u, 17b-749a and 17b-749c of the C.G.S.;

2. Foster partnerships among providers of School Readiness programs;

3. Cooperate with the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood in any program evaluation after July 1, 2000, use measures developed pursuant to section 10-16s of the C.G.S. for purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of School Readiness programs;

4. Identify existing and prospective resources and services available to children and families;

5. Facilitate the coordination of the delivery of services to children and families, including (A) referral procedures, and (B) before-and after-school child care for children attending kindergarten programs;

6. Exchange information with other SRCs and community organizations serving children and families;

7. Make recommendations to school officials concerning the transition from School Readiness programs to kindergarten; and

8. Encourage public participation.

Two or more towns or school districts and appropriate representatives of groups or entities interested in early childhood education in a region may establish a regional SRC. If a priority school is located in at least one of such school districts, the regional SCR may apply for a grant pursuant to subsection (d) of section 10-16p of the C.G.S. The regional SRC may perform the duties (2) to (10) outlined in the section above.

School Readiness Council Structure:

Refer to Council membership as outlined above in legislation. For further clarification:

1. The Chief Elected Official and the Superintendent, or their designees, are members of the Council. The Chief Elected Official designates the Chair or Co-chairs.

2. The Chief Elected Official convenes the Council and leads the work in collaboration with the school district Superintendent. There is an option to form a regional School Readiness Council, for more information on this option, contact your School Readiness State Program Manager.

   To avoid School Readiness Council administrative conflict of interest, the following guidelines are provided.

   - The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood recommends co-chairs instead of one chair (Chief Elected Official and Superintendent or their designees).

- Program Directors that receive School Readiness funds, School Readiness Liaisons, or direct supervisors of Liaisons are not eligible to be Chairs or Co-chairs of the Council.
- Program Directors that receive School Readiness funds, School Readiness Liaisons, or direct Supervisors of Liaisons may not be designees on behalf of the Chief Elected Official or Superintendent.
- When the Chief Elected Official or Superintendent and their designees all attend Council meetings, the Chief Elected Official and the Superintendent vote with the Council, the designees do not have a vote. When designees represent Chief Elected Official or the Superintendent, the designees vote on their behalf.

3. Council By-Laws and Decision-making:

   Councils should have written by-laws and policies that describe decision-making processes utilizing the existing State School Readiness policies as a foundation. By-Laws and policies should not favor one sector (example; public school, community provider) over another.

   Recommendations for funding and all School Readiness Council work shall not be overruled by the Chief Elected Official or Superintendent or any other governing body at the local level. The School Readiness Council is a collaborative network charged with planning to serve all 3- and 4-year old children in high quality programs. The intent is:

   - To engage in shared and informed decision-making; for example, informed by the cross-sector membership of the Council. Since the involvement of the Chief Elected Official and Superintendent offices is required, all matters and decisions are discussed and voted upon openly at Council meetings.
   - School Readiness Liaisons do not vote on Council matters.
   - Early Childhood Providers do not vote on distribution of funds.
   - The fiduciary (the Town, Board of Education, Regional Education Service Center, Human Resource Agency, or Department of Health/Youth Services) assists the School Readiness Council with fiscal responsibilities associated with the administration of the grant. The fiduciary's governing body does not hold decision-making authority regarding the administration, coordination, or evaluation of the School Readiness grant, inclusive of funding decisions.

4. The Role of the Council Liaison:

   The Liaison is responsible for the coordination, program evaluation and administration of the School Readiness Grant and serves as liaison between the local or regional School Readiness Council and the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. One of the primary responsibilities is to recruit eligible programs for potential funding (see appendix: Role of the Liaison).

   To ensure bias-free implementation of the grant, it is necessary that the Liaison remain impartial. The following guidance is provided:

   - The Liaison may be a contracted position with an independent consultant or an educational organization. The Liaison can be employed by the Municipality, Regional

Education Service Center (RESC), Local Education Agency, Community Action Program, etc.

- The Liaison must be supervised by an individual who is not directly overseeing programs that receive School Readiness funds, such as the School Readiness site administrator:
    - Example: Liaisons can be supervised by non-program administrators such as an Assistant Superintendent, Mayor or administrative staff not directly overseeing funded programs. Onsite program administrators receiving School Readiness funds may not supervise Liaisons.
- Liaisons are specifically charged with the administration, coordination, and evaluation of the School Readiness grant in collaboration with the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. Program directors and or staff who work in programs that receive School Readiness funds may not act as the Liaison, however, exceptions may be granted. The School Readiness Council may seek assistance from their Connecticut Office of Early Childhood program manager.

It is the responsibility of the SRCs and the Liaisons to share this information with their sub-grantees and ensure that each program is in compliance with the nonsectarian guidelines in order for sub-grantees to receive funding as a School Readiness program.

For further information concerning this GENERAL POLICY please contact:

SCHOOL READINESS
Gerri Rowell **Program Manager** **860-713-6774** **Gerri.Rowell@ct.gov**

General Policy C-01 Appendix
Roles and Responsibilities in the Administration, Coordination and Evaluation of the School Readiness Program

The designated person(s) responsible for coordination, program evaluation and administration and who acts as liaison between the local or regional School Readiness Council and the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood shall:

Maintain ongoing communication between the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, the local or regional School Readiness Council, the Mayor (or designee) the Superintendent (or designee) and the sub-grantees.

- Staff the School Readiness Council and be responsible for:
  - Meeting minutes
  - Creating meeting agenda
  - Completing reports - unmet needs, utilization, fiscal, school readiness monthly reports,
  - annual Quality Enhancement report and Connecticut School Readiness Preschool Program
  - Evaluation System (C.S.R.P.P.E.S.)
  - Maintaining Council membership
  - Communicating legislative requirements of the School Readiness grant
  - Providing resources to and guiding, reviewing and updating policy and procedure
  - development with the Council
- Oversee the School Readiness and Quality Enhancement grant application processes using the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood template and following local bidding processes:
  - Author the Community School Readiness and Quality Enhancement grants
  - Coordinate the development of the Letters of Agreement
  - Organize the grant application review of proposals and submit program allocation
  - recommendations to the School Readiness Council for approval
  - Manage the delivery of the award letter to the city for the local acceptance and approval process
  - Provide Technical Assistance to individual programs applying for School Readiness funds
  - Work with the local fiscal agent to insure the proper expenditure of School Readiness funds
  - Develop contracts with School Readiness sub-grantees
- Provide outreach to the community to assist families in the enrollment process for School Readiness and other early care opportunities.
- Meet regularly with providers to provide a forum to:
  - Share information and best practices
  - Review and clarify policies and regulations
  - Disseminate information
  - Assess needs and set priorities
  - Problem solve
  - Share resources

- Develop collaborative initiatives
- Provide technical assistance on policies and practices related to the School Readiness quality components or seek those with expertise that can provide such assistance

- Conduct regular site visits* to monitor compliance with all of the School Readiness grant regulations and develop action plans when appropriate. The areas to be regularly monitored include:

  Fiscal and policy compliance
  - Staff qualifications
  - Attendance
  - Parent fees
  - Annual State Single Audits required for programs receiving $300,000 or more in state funds
  - Curriculum and assessment
  - Accreditation and approval timelines
  - Licensing
  - Professional development
  - Program adherence to all School Readiness Components: health, family literacy, nutrition, etc.

*The School Readiness Liaison is ultimately responsible for monitoring the individual sub-grantees. While monitoring activities may be subcontracted out, those indicators related to the areas of Curriculum and Assessment must be assessed by someone with early childhood expertise and experience.

- Collaborate with local school systems and early care and education programs to develop and implement the local transition to kindergarten plan.
- Manage, maintain and archive records.
- Attend scheduled liaison meetings to exchange information with Connecticut Office of Early Childhood and respond to Connecticut Office of Early Childhood requests for information
- Support the development and ongoing implementation of the community's early childhood plan.
- Represent the School Readiness Council in the community and across the state.

Developed collaboratively by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood and School Readiness Council Liaisons