



Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program General Policy

B-05

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

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: Policy for Programs Meeting National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Program Accreditation Requirements

This GENERAL POLICY is intended to provide guidance to programs and communities on meeting legislative and contractual requirements for National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation in School Readiness, Smart Start, or Child Day Care programs funded by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC). It is the responsibility of the Contractor¹ for a state funded program to understand and adhere to this General Policy.

Programs utilizing the Head Start system as an accepted route to meeting the approval requirements must adhere to the requirements and process of the Head Start system's required documents and procedures (refer to GPA-02 Approval Systems).

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Any program funded by the OEC for School Readiness, Child Day Care or Smart Start is required to achieve NAEYC Accreditation of Head Start Approval according to CGS 10-16p and/or the Child Day Care Contract (see Legislative and Contractual Citations, page 5). These programs must achieve accreditation by the third anniversary of funding, as determined by the original start date for funding established as the first day children attend the program, and recorded and maintained by the OEC. Further, NAEYC Accreditation is required for all OEC funded components in the site where Smart Start funds are utilized.

The OEC strongly encourages programs to seek the opportunity to ensure a high-quality and developmentally appropriate program for all early childhood classrooms or programs within a site. Where multiple classrooms are located in a site, careful consideration should be given to the NAEYC

¹ Contractor: for School Readiness: The School Readiness Liaison; for Smart Start: the Board of Education; for Child Day Care: Contractor)

policy regarding “Multiple programs within the same facility”. The OEC supports and expects compliance with this policy, which states:

“a group can only be excluded from a program’s NAEYC Accreditation if it is part of a separate program that has a separate public identity. A program pursuing NAEYC Accreditation must notify NAEYC of all separate programs that operate within its facility and be able to demonstrate a separate budget, administration, license and/or other criteria.”

Programs provide this notification in the NAEYC candidacy/renewal materials.

The OEC’s requirements for NAEYC Accreditation may not extend to preschool special education services. Classrooms that provide this service that are in a Smart Start funded site are included in the accreditation requirement, unless they meet NAEYC’s policy regarding “Multiple programs within the same facility”. However, the OEC considers it best practice for all co-located preschool classrooms to be included in the quality improvement process and accreditation.

Kindergarten classrooms have a separate public identity from the preschool classrooms and are not required to be included under requirements for OEC funded early childhood programs. Although kindergarten classrooms do not need to be/become NAEYC accredited, the local or regional board of education’s preK-3rd grade plan may require accreditation as part of an on-going commitment to high-quality early learning.

EXTENDING AN EXISTING NAEYC ACCREDITATION TO NEWLY FUNDED CLASSROOMS

It is possible that an existing classroom operating under an OEC state funding stream such as School Readiness or a Child Day Care contract may already operate at the site where new state funded (e.g. Smart Start) classrooms will be located, and that those existing classrooms or program may already meet the state’s requirement for accreditation. In this case, the new OEC funding may enable expansion of this facility to include additional classrooms and the classrooms will be incorporated under the existing approval. If this route is elected to meet the approval requirement for new classrooms, it is the responsibility of the administration of the program to adhere to NAEYC’s requirements regarding the reporting of any programmatic changes. Please see <http://www.naeyc.org/academy/pursuing/changes>.

If the existing state funded program at the site is not already meeting the accreditation requirement, the three-year timeline for achieving NAEYC Accreditation applies based on the earliest funding start date at the site as recorded by OEC. The addition of funding to an existing state funded program does not ‘reset the clock’ to a new 3-year timeframe.

DOCUMENTING PROGRESS TOWARD NAEYC ACCREDITATION

Programs that are pursuing NAEYC Accreditation are expected to provide documentation of their progress to their OEC Program Manager (and the School Readiness Liaison where applicable).

With regard to the NAEYC Accreditation process, programs will:

- Initiate the NAEYC Accreditation process at the beginning of their involvement as a state funded provider by engaging in the NAEYC self-study and assessment steps;
- Submit a timeline for the NAEYC Accreditation process which includes projected dates of submissions and visits;
- Secure appropriate technical assistance;
- Provide notification of the confirmed dates for the NAEYC visitation window and site visit;
- Provide notification of the NAEYC accreditation decision;

- Upload the Accreditation Decision Report and Accreditation certificate to the Registry within 72 hours of receipt.

MAINTAINING NAEYC ACCREDITATION

To maintain compliance with NAEYC Accreditation requirements, programs must:

- Adhere to all NAEYC policies and requirements, including self-reporting and 72-Hour Notification, and provide a copy of these reports at the time the report is submitted to NAEYC, to the OEC Program Manager (and the School Readiness Liaison where applicable); and
- provide these NAEYC reports, within 72 hours of receipt from NAEYC:
 - documentation of the results of any NAEYC on-site visits including random unannounced or verification visits to the OEC Program Manager (and the School Readiness Liaison where applicable) ; and
 - Accreditation Decision Reports; and
 - Annual Reports with confirmation of acceptance by NAEYC, via upload to the Registry.

EXTENSION REQUESTS

In rare cases a newly funded program may require additional time to achieve NAEYC Accreditation and may be considered for a one time only extension request. The extension request process is implemented through the OEC Program Manager (and the School Readiness Liaison where applicable) as follows:

1. Notification of the need for an extension is made to the OEC according to the communication protocol established in GP C-01.
2. The extension request will be created and submitted by the Contractor and will include:
 - a. detailed information regarding the rationale for the request.
 - b. specific time-lines addressing the current accreditation process; and
 - c. the proposed extension term with rationale.
3. The OEC will review the extension request to determine the next steps. If the OEC grants an extension:
 - a. a specific time period will be approved, and the individual program will develop and follow a program improvement action plan and timeline for completion of the NAEYC Accreditation process.
 - b. The program will participate in the **Alternative Interim Quality Assurance Process** outlined below.
4. The OEC will determine whether the site makes sufficient progress toward achieving accreditation within one year of the implementation of this process; or if the site is negligent in addressing areas of concern, the OEC may reallocate funding to another program or site (See section titled **Removal of State Funds**).

Programs that are seeking NAEYC Accreditation renewal are not eligible for an extension. See **Loss of NAEYC Accreditation below**.

ALTERNATIVE INTERIM QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

To provide quality improvement monitoring in programs that are not NAEYC Accredited, programs will participate in Alternative Interim Quality Assurance. This process includes:

- On-site monitoring conducted by OEC staff;
- Implementation of an OEC identified assessment tool (e.g. ITERS, ECERS, PAS, etc) by an OEC approved, reliable rater, at the program's expense;

- Development of a written program improvement action plan with reasonable and appropriate timeframes, which may be submitted and/or revised over time, detailing the process(es) the site will undertake to:
 - Address program improvement issues identified through data and assessments such as the site visit, monitoring tool(s), NAEYC tools, and reports; and
 - Achieve NAEYC Accreditation.

The OEC will determine whether the site makes sufficient progress toward achieving accreditation within one year of the implementation of this process; or if the site is negligent in addressing areas of concern, the OEC may reallocate funding to another program or site (See **Removal of State Funds**).

LOSS OF NAEYC ACCREDITATION

If an NAEYC Accredited state funded program experiences a loss of accreditation through deferral, denial, revocation or inability to complete the renewal process according to the NAEYC timeline for renewal, the following process will be followed by the Contractor:

1. Provide the appropriate OEC Program Manager with a copy of communication received from NAEYC including the Accreditation Decision Report, within 72 hours of receipt from NAEYC.
2. Submit, within one month, a detailed program improvement action plan to the OEC Program Manager that addresses the issues identified, the persons responsible and the strategies that will be used to ensure adherence to the timelines established by NAEYC for re-submission of materials.
3. Immediately arrange a meeting with the OEC Program Manager(s) to discuss the circumstances and continued eligibility for state funding. The meeting will address the specific reason(s) for the loss of accreditation.
4. The OEC will review the detailed action plan and strategies to determine the next steps.
 - a. If the OEC grants an extension, a specific time period will be approved, and the individual program will develop and follow an action plan and timeline for completion of the NAEYC Accreditation process. Are these submitted to anyone??
 - b. If an extension is not requested, or is not granted, please see section titled **Removal of State Funds**.
5. For Child Day Care Contracted sites: The action plan will include the Alternate Interim Quality Assurance Process. If a program is granted this option, all children served in that location will be funded at the non-accredited rate.

REMOVAL OF STATE FUNDS

If a program does not achieve or maintain its NAEYC Accreditation according to legislative requirements, or complete the program improvement action plan within one year of notification by NAEYC that their accreditation is lost, the OEC will address this according to these steps:

1. The Contractor will notify the OEC immediately.
2. The Contractor will notify the appropriate OEC Program Manager with notification in writing signed by the Mayor/Chief Elected Official and Superintendent;
3. The OEC Program Manager will notify the program that no new children may be enrolled in the program and identify the last date that state funds will be available to support the program.
4. For School Readiness Programs: The Liaison will work collaboratively with the SRC and program to communicate, in writing, to families that
 - a. The program is unable to continue as a School Readiness program because the program did not achieve or maintain its accreditation and therefore families have the following options:

- i . Continue with the School Readiness subsidy in the same type of School Readiness space at another School Readiness program provided by the community;
 - ii. Remain at the program with the family paying the program fee; or
 - iii. Connect families to 211 Child Care to explore other child care availability.
 - b. The Liaison will explore available program options in the community in order to transfer the spaces in a timely fashion.
 - c. The Liaison will work to transfer the spaces to another (School Readiness) funded program no later than the end of the grant period.
 - d. The Liaison will put forward proposed sites for space reallocation to the OEC for approval.
 - e. Upon OEC approval, the SRC will transfer all School Readiness spaces to a selected program(s).
- 5. For Child Day Care Contracted Programs: The Contractor may subcontract with a new site and must submit a plan for offering currently enrolled families the opportunity to enroll in the new site. The new site is considered a newly state funded program with a three year deadline for achievement of accreditation. The addition of funding to an existing OEC funded program does not ‘reset the clock’ to a new 3-year timeframe.
- 6. Programs that experience a removal of state funding and subsequently achieve NAEYC Accreditation may be considered for funding in a future grant cycle.

LEGISLATIVE AND CONTRACTUAL CITATIONS

School Readiness

Public Act 14-39 amended subsection (b) of Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) 10-16q and the law now requires that “...Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (e) of section 10-16p, as amended by this act, the office shall not provide funding to any school readiness provider that (A) for the school year commencing July 1, 2015, and each school year thereafter, is a local or regional board of education that does not collect preschool experience data using the preschool experience survey, described in section 86 of this act, and make such data available for inclusion in the public school information system, pursuant to section 10-10a, as amended by this act, (B) on or before January 1, 2004, first entered into a contract with a town to provide school readiness services pursuant to this section and is not accredited on January 1, 2007, or (C) after January 1, 2004, first entered into a contract with a town to provide school readiness services pursuant to this section and does not become accredited by the date three years after the date on which the provider first entered into such a contract, except that the commissioner may grant an extension of time for a school readiness program to become accredited or reaccredited, provided (i) prior to such extension, the office conducts an on-site assessment of any such program and maintains a report of such assessment completed in a uniform manner, as prescribed by the commissioner, that includes a list of conditions such program must fulfill to become accredited or reaccredited, (ii) on or before June 30, 2014, the program is licensed by the Department of Public Health if required to be licensed by chapter 368a, and on and after July 1, 2014, the program is licensed by the office if required to be licensed by chapter 368a, (iii) the program has a corrective action plan that shall be prescribed by and monitored by the office, and (iv) the program meets such other conditions as may be prescribed by the commissioner. During the period of such extension, such program shall be eligible for funding pursuant to section 10-16p, as amended by this act.”

Smart Start

PA 14-41 section 1(c)(3) “...obtain accreditation, as described in section 10-16p of the general statutes, not later than three years after the creation or expansion of the preschool program...”

Child Day Care Contracts

Per the 2009 Department of Social Services contract and the 2013-2014 Department of Education amendment to that contract, all programs serving children under Child Day Care contracts are required to fall into one of the following categories:

- Programs currently accredited by NAEYC, designated by U.S. Health and Human Services to be a Head Start grantee or delegate, or approved by the Council on Accreditation (COA).
- A new subcontractor, currently pursuing NAEYC or accreditation or approval by the National After School Association (NAA) or such other after school accreditation as the Commissioner may approve; and on track to achieve accreditation within a three year window from the date upon which they first became a subcontractor. Programs in this category must have an annual CSDE approved environmental rating scale completed at their own expense, utilizing a CSDE approved rater; or
- A program that is participating in the Alternative Interim Quality Assurance process (see Child Day Care, page 5) as a result of having their NAEYC Accreditation revoked.

For further information concerning this GENERAL POLICY please contact:

CHILD DAY CARE	SCHOOL READINESS	STATE HEAD START and SMART START
<p>Michelle Levy Program Manager 860-713-6756 Michelle.Levy@ct.gov</p>	<p>Gerri Rowell Program Manager 860-713-6774 Gerri.Rowell@ct.gov</p>	<p>Andrea Brinnel Program Manager 860-713-6771 Andrea.Brinnel@ct.gov</p>