

**School Readiness General Policy**

**GP-09-06**

(replaces SR-07-03)

Priority School Readiness Districts  
 Competitive School Readiness Municipalities

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

**FROM:** Harriet Feldlaufer, Chief  
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Bureau of Early Childhood Education

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Department of Social Services  
Bureau of Assistance Programs

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

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The School Readiness program requires that all programs, within three years of the start date when children begin attending School Readiness sites must achieve the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation or be approved by the Head Start system. This GENERAL POLICY is intended to provide guidance to programs and communities on meeting the requirements of the new NAEYC accreditation system under the time limitations required by this new legislation. Programs approved through the Head Start system must adhere to the same requirements and process using their individual system's required documents and procedures.

Public Act 08-170 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 of the 2006 supplement to the general statutes, as amended by this act, the Department of Education shall not provide funding to any school readiness provider that (A) 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 (B) 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 of Education may grant an extension of time for a school readiness program to become accredited or reaccredited, provided (i) prior to such extension, the Department of Education 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) the program is licensed by the Department of Public Health 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 Commissioner of Education, 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 said section 10-16p, as amended by section 1 of public act 08-85."*

In order to determine adherence to the above accreditation/approval timelines and requirements, the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) will record and maintain the original start date for all programs.

## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

### **Programs Without NAEYC Accreditation and Contracted After January 1, 2004**

Programs will:

- initiate the NAEYC accreditation process at the beginning of the School Readiness contract period by submitting an enrollment form to NAEYC;
- share all correspondence, documentation of progress toward NAEYC Accreditation and scheduled dates of submissions and visits with the School Readiness Liaison to ensure that the Liaison has current knowledge of the process and the status of the programs;
- develop a schedule for the NAEYC Accreditation process and secure appropriate technical assistance;
- remain on schedule with School Readiness requirements to achieve NAEYC Accreditation or notify the Liaison to follow procedures for an extension request (see section on **Requests for Extensions**);
- submit the required documents to become a NAEYC applicant at least 15 months before the third anniversary of the program's date in which they began serving School Readiness children;
- meet all NAEYC candidacy requirements and submit the completed Program Self-Assessment Report at least four months before the third anniversary of the program's School Readiness contract with the town, and the Liaison will submit to SDE proof of timely submission of candidacy materials;
- notify the Liaison of the dates for the NAEYC visitation window, and the Liaison will then notify the SDE; and
- notify Liaisons of the NAEYC Accreditation decision and provide the Commission Decision Report and certificate the Liaison will then forward these reports and certificates to the SDE.

If a program does not achieve NAEYC accreditation within three (3) years of the date of the original School Readiness funding, or maintain accreditation, or is denied an extension, the withdrawal of funds may result; see section titled **Community Requirements**.

### **Programs With NAEYC Accreditation**

NAEYC Accredited programs must maintain their accreditation by:

- adhering to all NAEYC policies and requirements regarding the maintenance of accreditation;
- reporting within 90 days any changes such as licensing, location, ownership, governance, age groups to be served, and court orders to NAEYC and simultaneously provide documentation to the Liaison;
- notifying the Liaison regarding the date of the NAEYC visitation window or any reports from unscheduled visits; and
- notifying the Liaison regarding the results of verification visits, provide documentation of those visits, and the Liaisons will then forward accreditation decision reports and certificates to the SDE.

### **Deferral/Denial of Programs in the NAEYC Reaccreditation Process**

Programs seeking reaccreditation that receive a deferral decision following their verification visit must:

- provide the Liaison with a copy of the deferral report and Liaisons will then forward the deferral report to the SDE; and
- submit, in a timely manner, a detailed action plan to the Liaison that addresses the issues identified in the deferral report, the persons responsible and the strategies that will be used to ensure adherence to the timelines established by NAEYC for re-submission of materials, and the Liaison will then forward documentation to the SDE.

Programs seeking reaccreditation that receive a denial decision following their verification visit must:

- immediately arrange, through the Liaison, a meeting with the School Readiness Program Manager and Accreditation Coordinator to discuss the circumstances for the denial and continued eligibility for School Readiness funding.

## **ACCREDITATION EXTENSION REQUESTS**

### **Procedures**

- The program will notify the School Readiness Council (SRC), through the Liaison, of issues related to not obtaining accreditation and reaccreditation within the predetermined timeline.
- The Liaison shall notify the SDE, Bureau of Early Childhood, Accreditation Coordinator, of any pending issues regarding accreditation.
- The SRC will assess and evaluate the program's request and determine the Council's commitment to continue this provider's contract as a School Readiness sub-grantee.
- If the SRC determines the program meets quality standards for children and families as determined by NAEYC, the Council may submit a letter to the SDE Bureau Chief of Early Childhood Education, to request an extension of time to achieve reaccreditation. The letter must include detailed information regarding the rationale for the request. Specific time-lines addressing the current accreditation process and the proposed extension must be included with the request. The SRC should be diligent in considering the programs ability to reengage in the accreditation process in an expedient manner.
- The SDE will review the extension request letter to determine the next steps as outlined in the legislation. If the SDE grants an extension, the individual program will follow the action plan outlined for that program. The Department of Social Services (DSS) will be included in the review of all requests from the Priority School Readiness Districts.

If the SRC chooses not to request an extension to continue the accreditation timeline, please see section titled **Community Requirements, De-funding School Readiness Programs** for de-funding process.

## **COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS**

If a program does not achieve accreditation by NAEYC or secure a waiver from SDE, there will be a withdrawal of funds by the community through the process described in this GENERAL POLICY.

### **De-Funding School Readiness Programs**

When a program does not achieve/maintain accreditation per School Readiness requirements, the following process is initiated:

- The Liaison must notify the SDE immediately when a program does not achieve or maintain accreditation followed by written notification signed by the Mayor/Chief Elected Official and Superintendent.
- The number of spaces currently being utilized will be frozen and new children must not be enrolled.
- The program must immediately provide the Liaison the names and addresses of all School Readiness children enrolled in their program.
- The Liaison will work collaboratively with the SRC and program to communicate, in writing, to the School Readiness families that the program did not achieve or maintain its accreditation and therefore;
  - the program is unable to continue as a School Readiness program; and
  - the Liaison will explore available program options in the community in order to transfer the spaces in a timely fashion.

- The Liaison will work to transfer the spaces to another School Readiness funded program no later than the end of the grant period.
- Families must be offered the following options:
  - continue with the School Readiness subsidy in the same type of School Readiness space at another School Readiness program provided by the community;
  - remain at the program with the family paying the program fee; or
  - refer families to 211 Child Care to explore other child care availability.
- The Liaison will put forward proposed sites for space reallocation to the SDE for approval. DSS will be included in the approval process for Priority School Readiness Districts.
- Upon SDE approval, the SRC will transfer all School Readiness spaces to a selected program(s). DSS will be included in the approval process for Priority School Readiness Districts.
- The program will not be reimbursed for School Readiness spaces after the spaces are transferred.
- Programs that subsequently achieve NAEYC Accreditation may be considered for School Readiness funding by their local School Readiness Council in the next grant cycle.

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.

**Questions concerning this GENERAL POLICY should be directed to:**

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