



**Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program General Policy
A-05**

- OEC Child Day Care Contractors
- OEC Competitive School Readiness Municipalities
- 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
Division of Early Care and Education

SUBJECT: Requirements for conducting research involving OEC funded programs

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) understands the importance of research to improve the field of early childhood care and education. The OEC is also committed to the protection of families, staff and children served in programs funded in full or in part by the OEC. To this end, the OEC has established the OEC Office of the Commissioner Institutional Review Board (IRB) whose responsibility is to review activities categorized as research that involve human subjects or their personal information. All research conducted in early care and education programs which are funded in full or in part by the OEC or directly promoted as an opportunity for families receiving OEC funded services must be approved by the IRB. This applies to all researchers including OEC employees, contractors and non-OEC researchers (e.g. university faculty, staff, graduate students and undergraduate students). The goal of the IRB review process is to safeguard the rights, welfare and confidentiality of children, families and staff, and their personal information.

The following provides information to activities regarding research that must be reviewed by the IRB.
Whenever there is any doubt about the need for the IRB approval, contact your program manager.

Definitions

Institutional Review Board (IRB): A committee established to review research involving human subjects to ensure the rights and welfare of participants.

Personal Information: Information that uniquely identifies an individual when considered individually or in combination with other information (e.g., name, address, account numbers, date of birth, biometrics, other unique identifying numbers, characteristics or codes).

Program Evaluation: An assessment of the effectiveness of a program or service.

Research: A systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge¹.

¹ HHS.gov

Regular program activities entail the collection of various types of information (e.g., for quality management or reporting purposes), including personal information. When program staff or the OEC are the only users of this information, there is no need for the IRB involvement. The submission of reports and documentation required for ongoing OEC program operations does not constitute research, and therefore does not require IRB involvement. However, some of this information may be of interest to researchers. If these data are to be shared beyond your own program or the OEC, it may require IRB review.

Research Governed by this Policy

Required to Evaluate OEC Programs: On occasion, program evaluation activities required either by the OEC or by the state legislature may involve activities that are also considered research. Such activities may involve the use of personally identifiable data already collected by programs or the collection of new data or information regarding programs, staff, children or families. Generally, the OEC will share information about any required research activities with the programs involved. If programs are approached regarding this type of activity, they should ask for documentation of OEC IRB approval. If documentation is not available, see below under, “How to Handle a Research Request”.

Targeting OEC Funded Programs, Families or Children: Any research that specifies the OEC-affiliation as a component of eligibility criteria and requests access to personal information (see definition above) must be approved by the OEC IRB.

Targeting General Early Care and Education Programs: Researchers may target general early care and education programs and/or children and families enrolled in these programs. Such research may happen to involve children or families whose services are funded in part or in full through the OEC, but funded programs, children and families are not specifically targeted. Examples might include examining aggregate or de-identified data on the effects of participation in a professional development program, curricular enhancement, or questionnaires distributed to families. While all of these activities must be reviewed by an IRB, review by the IRB may not be required if another IRB of cognizance has reviewed and approved the research activities. Most large educational institutions have their own IRBs which are responsible for reviewing research activities involving human subjects done in conjunction with their programs, faculty or students. **Early care and education programs should always ask for proof of IRB approval prior to participating or promoting any research activities that involve their program, staff, children or families.** Whenever there is any doubt about IRB approval, contact your program manager.

How to Handle Requests Targeting OEC Funded Programs, Families or Children

If you are approached by a person asking for access to data regarding programs, families or children funded by the OEC, please ask them to confirm that their research has been approved by the IRB. If another IRB has given approval, or if no IRB approval has been secured, please direct the person to the OEC website ([OEC IRB](#)).

OEC Support of Research Activities

The OEC is often asked to support grant applications or to endorse particular research projects. **The OEC letters of support or interest do not constitute IRB approval.** All requests for participation in research targeting programs, children or families funded by the OEC must be reviewed by the OEC IRB, which may accept another IRB’s approval or conduct its own IRB review.

OEC IRB Approval

OECIRB approval does not obligate any program or individual to participate in voluntary research. Unless the research in question is required for evaluation efforts (see page 2 “Research Required to Evaluate OEC Programs”) the program may decline participating in or disseminating information about a particular research effort.

It is the researcher’s responsibility to seek and obtain IRB approval. **Unless you are the researcher, you do not need to file any IRB forms.**

For further information concerning this GENERAL POLICY please contact:

CHILD DAY CARE	SCHOOL READINESS and SMART START	STATE HEAD START
Deb Flis Program Manager 860-713-6982 Deb.flis@ct.gov	Andrea Brinnel Program Manager 860-713-6771 Andrea.brinnel@ct.gov	Amparo Garcia Program Manager 860-713-6783 Amparo.garcia@ct.gov

More information about the OEC Office of the Commissioner Institutional Review Board is available at:
<http://www.ct.gov/oec/cwp/view.asp?a=4546&q=569276> Inquiries may be sent to oec.irb@ct.gov.