



The More You Know, The Better They Grow

In an effort to raise awareness of programs and services provided by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), the OEC launched its “The More You Know, The Better They Grow” campaign this October.

The pre-campaign phase of the project included four focus groups of parents with children between the ages of birth to five who lived in and around Willimantic, New Haven, Norwalk and Hartford. A total of 41 English- and Spanish-speaking parents participated. The focus groups found that parents cited cellular and smart phones or Internet via Google as the leading methods of communication. These devices were their primary link for all communication including friends, family, community organizations and beyond.

As a result of the focus group findings and based on the state’s demographics, the campaign utilizes transit/bus, radio, billboards, print, online and mobile advertising to reach its target audience of low-income parents and family members of young children. The OEC also partnered with United Way of Connecticut to create a mobile microsite which features a myriad of early childhood-related information and resources for families. The microsite, <http://www.211childcare.org/oec>, can be easily accessed on mobile devices and is the call to action on campaign materials (along with dial 2-1-1). In addition to advertisements, the OEC will have articles in community newspapers, interviews, videos, printed materials and window clings as part of the campaign. The campaign will run through December.

The more you know, the better they grow.

Call 2-1-1 or visit
211childcare.org/oec



Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood



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Smart Start Gets Underway

Smart Start was created during the last legislative session by Public Act 14-41 which enacted Smart Start “to reimburse local and regional boards of education for capital and operating expenses related to establishing or expanding a preschool program under the jurisdiction of the board of education for the town.”

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is committed to providing children greater access to high-quality preschool programs in an effort to reduce the achievement gap between the state’s poorest students and their wealthier peers. Research shows that access to high-quality preschool programs provides important foundational skills needed for academic and lifelong success. Expanding preschool services to high-need children will increase opportunities for promoting children’s development and school readiness. Through Smart Start, more children can be engaged in high-quality preschool experiences that address the whole child including the developmental domains of cognition, science, mathematics, creative arts, language and literacy, physical health and development, social and emotional development, and social studies.

Local and regional boards of education will be able to propose expanding current preschool programs to include additional children or to create new preschool programs. Funding must be used to support enrollment in preschool programs that are at minimum school-day and school-year in duration (i.e., a minimum of 6 hours/day and 180 days/year). Funding in FY15 is limited to funding for capital expenses only. Funding for operational expenses will become available for FY16.

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) demonstrating unmet need for preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds will be able to apply for Smart Start funds as this grant is intended to serve additional children who would otherwise not be able to enroll in a high-quality preschool program. Unmet need may be determined as a result of a statewide needs assessment conducted by the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) on behalf of the OEC or demonstrated by the LEA (with supporting data).

A bidder’s conference was held on November 3, 2014 to give prospective applicants an overview of Smart Start and the application process. The OEC will review and rate proposals according to the Review Criteria in the request for proposals. The OEC will notify successful applicants in late February 2015.

The Request for Proposals and additional information about Smart Start is available on the OEC website at www.ct.gov/oec/smartstart. If you have questions or would like additional information about this funding opportunity, please contact Andrea Brinnel at andrea.brinnel@ct.gov.

Connecticut Children’s Behavioral Health Plan

Pursuant to Public Act 13-178 and under the leadership of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, the OEC has spent six months engaged in the development of the Connecticut’s Children’s Behavioral Health Plan. The OEC served as a member of the Advisory Committee which was created to guide the work of the Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) in the plan’s development. The impressively interactive process sought input from parents, families, providers and other stakeholders and resulted in over 100 written comments and numerous open forums, community conversations and facilitated discussions attended by nearly 800 individuals. The final plan was released to the public on September 30th and presented to the Legislature on October 1st.

OEC looks forward to assisting with the plan’s implementation in the months and years ahead, especially aspects of the plan that focus on the needs of babies and young children as well as their families.

Public Act 13-178 required the plan to be comprehensive and integrated and meet the behavioral and mental health needs of all children in the state and to prevent or reduce the long-term negative impact for children of mental, emotional and behavioral health issues.

To read the final plan, go to www.plan4children.org

Federal Preschool Development Expansion Grant

On October 14, the OEC submitted its application for the Federal Preschool Development Expansion Grant which would allow the state to develop, enhance and expand high-quality preschool opportunities for 4-year-olds living at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line. Connecticut is eligible for up to \$12.5 million per year for up to four years.

Based on the increasing poverty in many Competitive School Districts and the large unmet need in our state's largest city, Bridgeport, the OEC's application focused on increasing access in Bridgeport and the following Competitive School Districts: Derby, East Haven, Griswold, Groton, Hamden, Hebron, Killingly, Manchester, Naugatuck, Seymour, Torrington, Vernon and Wolcott. In addition to serving additional low-income children, the grant looks to improve program quality with high staff qualifications, low child-staff ratios and small class sizes, a Full-Day program and Comprehensive Services for children. No less than 95% of the funding will go directly to the communities being served by this grant with up to 5% of the remaining funding available for State-level infrastructure and quality improvements.

Funding for classroom improvements under this grant could be available immediately upon receipt of the grant with funding for expansion spaces beginning in mid-summer or September 2015. States receiving grant awards will be announced on December 10. The [grant application](#) is available on the OEC website under "Collaborations and Initiatives". For more information about the grant, please contact Maggie Adair at maggie.adair@ct.gov.



Connecticut Office of
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Preparing for Emergencies

In the event of a nuclear emergency, it has been found that Potassium Iodide (KI) can help protect people from harmful levels of radioactive iodine, especially in children. In a radiological release, state officials will notify child care providers within the Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ) surrounding the Millstone Power Station in Waterford to take precautions, which may include the administration of KI pills. Connecticut Statutes and Regulations allow for licensed child care programs to administer KI pills to children during a public health emergency declared by the Governor. This summer, in coordination with Department of Public Health, OEC Division of Licensing staff distributed informational materials and KI pills to licensed child care providers so they will have them available in the unlikely event of a nuclear release. This delivery of KI pills was performed to replace pills that had previously been provided to programs and will soon expire. Delivery to programs was completed this summer and a total of 4,781 pills were distributed.

Happy Birthday, Head Start!

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the national Head Start program. Begun under President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, Head Start has served over 31 million children since 1965 with comprehensive child development and family support services. In Connecticut there are 28 programs providing Head Start and/or Early Head Start services. Over the year there will be a number of events to celebrate this remarkable milestone. This is a great opportunity for us to learn more about the national Head Start program and how we can partner to promote school readiness and support families in our state. More information is available from the *National Head Start Association - 50 Years of Opportunity* at http://www.nhsa.org/50_years_of_opportunity or the Connecticut Head Start Association at (203) 996-6965.

Early Learning and Development Standards Distribution and New Document

This summer, the OEC published and distributed copies of Connecticut's Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS). The CT ELDS set forth what children, from birth to age five, should know and be able to do across domains of development and areas of learning. They are designed to provide a foundation and common language to help families, communities and schools work together to support children's early learning and growth. In addition to the full document, the OEC published a booklet with more general information about supporting children across domains and about the importance of screening (Action Guides) and posters which include information from the CT ELDS. Copies of appropriate materials were sent to early care and education providers (home and center-based), schools, libraries, pediatricians, public school special education directors and Birth-to-Three providers.

In addition, the OEC also published a document aligning the CT ELDS with the existing Preschool Assessment Framework (PAF). The crosswalk of both documents will allow programs currently using the PAF to continue using this assessment tool, while also using the CT ELDS to plan curriculum, learning experiences, teaching strategies and supports for children. There is general consistency between the CT PAF and the CT ELDS, although there is typically more detail in the CT ELDS.

You can access additional CT ELDS materials or request hard copies of materials via our online request form on our website at www.ct.gov/oec/elds.



2014 CAEYC Conference

On Friday, October 17, the Office of Early Childhood, in collaboration with CT Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC), recognized accomplishments in early childhood over the past year.

The award ceremony honored:

- CAEYC Teacher of the Year: Karen Papacoda from Housatonic Community College Early Childhood Lab School
- The Kaplan Award: Marie Monahan, St Mary's Hospital Child Care Center, Waterbury
- CT Director Credential Recipients (33 individuals)
- One family child care home newly accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care
- One hundred center-based programs newly accredited or renewed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children



Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Survey

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, United Way of Connecticut, and other agencies committed to the well-being of young children, want your input in our work to promote the development of children in child care settings. Your feedback will help us make sure that all of Connecticut's young children have the support they need to develop and thrive.

Your voice in this process is critical to help us improve the use and coordination of monitoring and screening in Connecticut in a way that works for our communities and early care and education (ECE) programs. We ask that this survey be completed by the Early Care and Education manager or a similarly qualified person in each center-based ECE program in Connecticut. Only one (1) survey should be completed for each ECE program. The survey takes about twenty minutes. To complete the online survey, select this link:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ECCS_EC

We are also asking parents and guardians of children who are five years old and younger, and in child care or preschool, to fill out a short online survey. The survey will take no more than ten minutes. After they have completed the survey, parents will be offered free resources to help monitor and promote their child's development. They will also have an opportunity to enroll in Ages and Stages, a free monitoring program which provides information so they can help support their child's development. Click this link for a survey in English:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ECCSParentEng> or in Spanish:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/eccsparentspanish>

Your answers are private. Due to the timeliness of this project, **we would appreciate a response by November 15th**. For additional information about the survey or the grant, please contact Heather Spada, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Project Manager at heather.spada@ctunitedway.org or visit the ECCS webpage: www.eccsct.org.

Infant Mental Health Presentations

Infant mental health professionals presented projects from around the state at The Inn in Middletown on August 21, 2014. The projects were also presented at the World Association for Infant Mental Health Conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland, June 14-18, 2014.

You can watch the presentations online at: <http://ct-n.com/ondemand.asp?ID=10607>.



Home Visiting Project

Public Act 13-178 called for the development of recommendations to coordinate the state's home visiting programs by December 1, 2014. For the past five months, the OEC has been working with a workgroup representing home visiting programs to develop recommendations on how to develop a common referral process, core competencies and training, core standards and outcomes, shared annual reporting of outcomes, home-based depression treatment options and intensive intervention.

A draft report and survey for feedback are available on the OEC website. The OEC welcomes your suggestions and comments on the report. To view the report, go to www.ct.gov/oec and click on "Collaborations and Initiatives". If you have any questions regarding the project, please contact Mary Farnsworth at mary.farnsworth@ct.gov.

Hartford Preschool and Kindergarten Information Fair

On Saturday, November 1st, the OEC, the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) and the Hartford Department of Families, Youth, Children and Recreation partnered to present a PreK-K Options Fair for families. The PreK-K Options Fair was held at the Pope Park Arroyo Recreation Center and was attended by more than 50 Hartford area families. Elizabeth Lopez, from the United Way's 211 Child Care Infoline, was on-hand to assist parents with understanding the wide range of choices they have for their young children. Families were able to gather information from over 70 different programs (public schools, charter, magnet and community-based).

The OEC and RSCO are offering technical assistance to other communities that would like to hold this type of event. For more information, contact Andrea Brinnel at andrea.brinnel@ct.gov or (860) 713-6771.



early choices,
lasting
success

HARTFORD
Preschool & Kindergarten
Information Fair

NOVEMBER 1, 2014
10:00am - 1:00pm

Learn how to make **the right choice** for your preschool or kindergarten child from all the options that are available for Hartford families with young children. Plan ahead for next year or enroll your child in a program now!

Pope Park
Arroyo Recreation Center
30 Pope Park Drive
Hartford, CT 06106

Governor Malloy Welcomes Preschoolers

On September 4, Governor Dannel P. Malloy, joined by Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor, state and local officials, visited the M.D. Fox School in Hartford to kick-off the school year and highlight recently expanded pre-K slots for new students, the result of an initiative championed by the Governor that created 1,020 additional school readiness opportunities throughout the state this year.

Thanks to this year's expansion, M.D. Fox School was able to add two preschool classrooms, increasing access to high-quality preschool to an additional 18 children.

While most of the students sat on the floor, one little girl and boy opted for the Governor's lap. Governor Malloy later got on the floor and showed the students where Connecticut was on the world map.

Perhaps the most touching part of the visit was when one student raised his hand and told the Governor, "I've never been to school before." This was followed by a number of his classmates chiming in and saying, "Me either!" This moment brought home the importance of what we do. Without programs like School Readiness, many children would not have the opportunity to go to preschool. Luckily for these children, they have that opportunity.



MIECHV Grant

The OEC Family Support Services Division has applied for a new Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) grant for a total of \$9.4 million over two years and seven months. The program objectives include: 1) Enhancing and expanding existing MIECHV and state-funded home visiting programs, 2) Sustaining progress by integrating MIECHV into the early childhood system, 3) Improving the expertise and competency of home visiting program staff, and 4) Assuring quality services and model fidelity. To achieve this, Connecticut will enhance and expand its MIECHV and state-funded Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Child First model home visiting programs. PAT works with vulnerable families while the mother is pregnant or shortly after the birth of the baby through age five. The PAT program will be enhanced with a focus on fathers and the mothers' intimate partners. Child First is an intensive intervention that works with pregnant women and at-risk children zero to age six and their families. Child First will focus on outreach to high-risk and hard to reach families. These funds will be used to expand services to an additional 2,624 families over the period of the grant.

Connecticut will incrementally expand PAT and Child First home visiting in the following high-risk communities with unmet need: Ashford, Bloomfield, Bolton, Bridgeport, Bristol, Canterbury, Colchester, Danbury, East Hartford, East Haven, Fairfield, Glastonbury, Griswold, Hartford, Killingly, Lisbon, Manchester, Mansfield, Meriden, Milford, New Hartford, New Haven, New London, North Branford, Norwich, Plainfield, Putnam, South Windsor, Southington, Sprague, Sterling, Stratford, Torrington, Trumbull, Vernon, Wallingford, Waterbury, West Hartford, West Haven, Winchester, Windham and Windsor.

For more information about the grant, visit the MIECHV website at www.ct.gov/oec/miechv.

All Staff Meeting

For our fall all staff meeting, the OEC focused on the most important part of our work: our families. As we move forward as an agency, it is important we always consider the young children and families we serve through our work. This not only includes how we go about our day-to-day work, but also how we look to the future of early childhood.

Three families shared their stories about how early childhood programs and services impacted them. There were tears, as well as laughs, as these families told the OEC staff about their experience navigating the early childhood system, how the services affected their families and what we should consider as we move ahead in our work.

During the afternoon session, it was time for some arts and crafts as staff worked with colleagues from other divisions to "build" our organization using pipe cleaners, construction paper and other materials. There were many hearts and children in the creations, emphasizing the OEC's dedication to young children.

