

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD NEWSLETTER

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NOW ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB!

We at the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) were happy to launch our new website and social media pages in mid-December. We were quite excited to finally have a web presence that we could direct constituents and stakeholders to for information and resources.

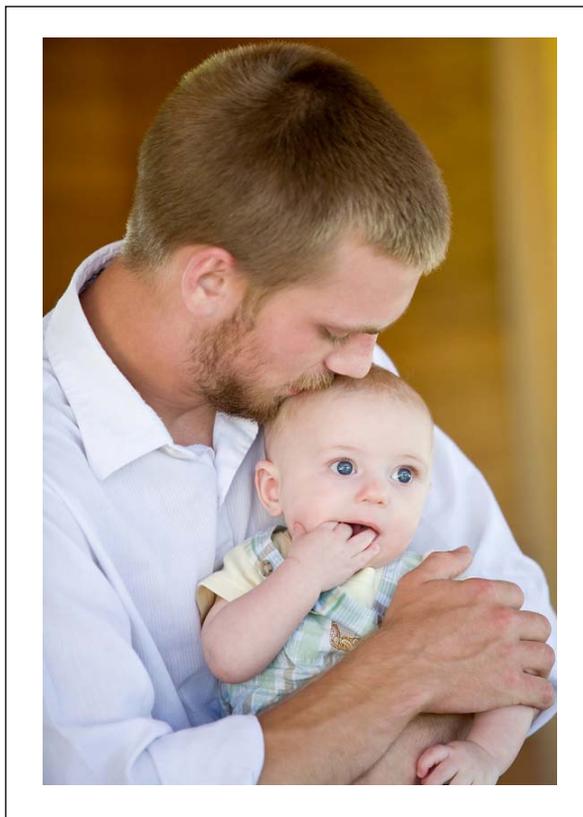
The website is organized with our two main audiences in mind: families and providers. It provides a breadth of information about the OEC, our programs and our work.

Our Facebook fan page started off with quite a splash, with over 200 fans in less than three days! We hope to grow that number in the coming months as well as our following for our Twitter and YouTube pages. Spread the word and like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter for useful tips and information.

If you haven't already, we invite you to visit our website and social media pages. Feel free to provide any feedback or suggestions to Diana Lejardi, Director of Communications, at diana.lejardi@ct.gov.

Web Addresses

- Website: www.ct.gov/oec
- Facebook Fan Page: www.facebook.com/ctoec
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/ct_oec
- YouTube: www.youtube.com/CTearlychild



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GEARING UP FOR THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 2014 Legislative Session convenes on Wednesday, February 5 and the OEC is getting ready. Maggie Adair, Director of Government and Community Relations, will watch for and monitor bills that could affect young children and their families. We'll also closely track legislation that will codify the OEC by transferring early childhood statutes from various state agencies to the OEC. This is a short session so things move very quickly! The last day of the 2014 session is midnight, Wednesday, May 7. If you have legislative questions during the session, Maggie can be reached at Maggie.Adair@ct.gov.

MISSION AND VISION

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood is a state agency that oversees a coordinated system of early childhood care, education and support.

Our Vision:

All young children in Connecticut are safe, healthy, learning and thriving. Each child is surrounded by a strong network of nurturing adults who deeply value the importance of the first years of a child's life and have the skills, knowledge, support and passion to meet the unique needs of every child.

Our Mission:

To support all young children in their development by ensuring that early childhood policy, funding and services strengthen the critical role families, providers, educators and communities play in a child's life.

Our Guiding Principles:

- Build family-centered and family-driven systems for *all* children in Connecticut
- Prioritize children facing barriers, risks, setbacks or challenges to their healthy development
- Foster a deep respect for cultural differences in child rearing practices
- Honor families' diverse languages, values, strengths and needs
- Consider the whole child, his or her family, and his or her community setting
- Value early childhood as a time of learning through play and building positive relationships
- Ensure equal access to and parent choice within all early childhood services
- Operate in an efficient, coordinated, caring, professional and effective manner
- Confront and eliminate institutional racism and disparities
- Engage in continuous and system quality improvement
- Utilize current best practices, available research and data
- Nurture and value collaborative partnerships, innovation and self-reflection

Our Work:

The Office of Early Childhood:

- Provides funding, standards, regulations, training and oversight to ensure that early care and education programs for young children
 - are safe, healthy and nurturing*;
 - effectively support children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development; and,
 - are accessible to all children, particularly those facing barriers, risks or challenges to their healthy development and success.
- Provides home visiting services, funding and training to support families raising young children to ensure the children's health, well-being and positive growth and development and to prevent child abuse or neglect.

*Licensing of child care and youth camps will transition to the Office of Early Childhood on July 1, 2014.

EARLY CHILDHOOD COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM (ECCS)

United Way of Connecticut, in partnership with the OEC, was awarded a three year planning grant from the federal government's Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA) to build Connecticut's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS). Our ECCS plan will focus on: coordination of the expansion of developmental screening activities in early care and education settings across the state by working with pediatric and other child health providers to link early screening training and referrals among medical homes, early intervention services, child care programs and families.

Key Objectives of the ECCS:

- 1) Expanding developmental screening activities and link appropriate referrals when needed among medical homes, early intervention services, child care programs and families;
- 2) Engaging health care providers, home visitors and other related professionals to improve linkages and referrals;
- 3) Promoting training for ECE professionals focusing on the importance of human development during infancy and early childhood, and on developmental and behavioral screenings; and,
- 4) Outlining necessary system enhancements, work flow, financing structures and policy changes necessary to support the strategy, including approaches for capturing and documenting developmental and behavioral health screening and referral activities across early care and education, health, and early intervention systems.



CHARTS-A-COURSE SCHOLARSHIPS

Do you know someone who could benefit from a scholarship toward their professional development? You can help by passing along this information!

The OEC Early Care and Education's Connecticut Charts-A-Course unit is again administering early childhood professional development scholarship funds via the Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Registry (www.ccacregistry.org). There is no fee to join the Registry and applying for scholarship online is fast!

Who can apply? Individuals who work for a Connecticut program for young children, as well as individuals not currently working in a CT early childhood facility but matriculating in an early childhood degree program at a Connecticut higher education institution, are strongly encouraged to apply.

Commitment vouchers are good for 60 days - once approved for funds, you will be notified by email and you can begin planning your registration. There is no cap on awards. Show positive progress and use of funds, and continue to apply for support.

Now is a particularly key time to register for spring courses.

Requests are being accepted for:

- Credit-based coursework and related fees
- Foreign degree translation and equivalency
- Pathways Exams
- Continuing education (non-credit)
- CDA (Child Development Associate credential) fees
- Connecticut Director Credential (CDC) fees

Please read the at-a-glance and FAQs for specific eligibility and more important details:

- <http://bit.ly/1bKzDk4>
- <http://bit.ly/1gAPd72>

Not sure if you are ready or still have questions after reading the at-a-glance and FAQs? Contact an OEC-CCAC career counselor for help: <http://bit.ly/1iJ5Y3f>

EARLY CHILDHOOD INFORMATION SYSTEM (ECIS) DEVELOPMENT KICKOFF

On November 20th, the OEC kicked off its Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) project.

Currently, Connecticut does not have a centralized mechanism for collecting and managing early childhood data, commonly known as an Early Childhood Information System (ECIS). To the contrary, early childhood data is dispersed across at least six agencies and more than 25 associated databases, making data sharing incredibly challenging.

The ECIS will help ensure that complete and accurate data is collected, linked to, and coordinated with the K-12 data system, in particular, so that quality assessments and longitudinal analyses of early care and education programs can be performed and student progress can be monitored.

An SDE IT Project Manager has been assigned to manage the ECIS Project. Two OEC Business Analysts have started working on high level use cases, business requirements and process flows. Each of the agencies and the databases that have been identified as housing and processing early childhood data will be contacted and the team will clearly document the use cases, business requirements and process flows over the next several months. Key stakeholders will be identified to review these documents and provide their expertise. Once this exercise is completed a technical design for the new ECIS Transactional System, QRIS and Data Warehouse will be developed so that priority components for multiple system releases can be coordinated and built over the next three years.

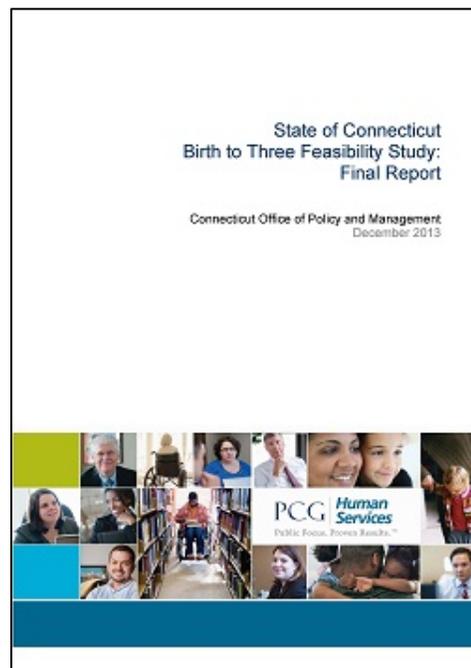


BIRTH TO THREE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Connecticut Office of Policy and Management released the Birth to Three Feasibility Study Final Report. The study, conducted by Public Consulting Group (PCG), looked at the feasibility of the Birth to Three Program, currently within the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), moving to the Office of Early Childhood. The report identified the various components that would be required for the transition and included timelines for completion.

The move of Birth to Three from DDS to OEC now requires legislation. A date for the transition is dependent on the legislation.

To review the report, visit our website at www.ct.gov/oec.



CHILD CARE LICENSING PROGRAM EVALUATION

The National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) conducted an evaluation of child care licensing in Connecticut to identify strengths and weaknesses within the program.

The Needs Assessment Process (NAP), conducted from August through December of 2013, included an online survey, onsite forums and in-depth interviews of survey participants. Participants included operators, providers and staff of licensed day care centers and homes, parents or guardians of children receiving child care from a licensed child care provider and child care licensing staff. Over 500 people participated in the online survey, 102 attended the onsite forums and 61 completed the in-depth survey.

The NAP recommended the development of internal policies, procedures and interpretive guides of regulations for child providers and licensing staff to

improve inter-rater reliability. Low inter-rater reliability means that inspectors do not interpret or apply the regulations the same way. The report also recommended strengthening training programs for child care providers and licensing staff and regularly reviewing and updating child care regulations.

By July 1, 2013, NARA will develop a policy and procedure manual for licensing staff, interpretive guides and train licensing staff in compliance with the developed policies and procedures.

To review NARA's final report, visit our website at www.ct.gov/oec/nara.



EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS BEING FINALIZED

Our Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) are being finalized and we have holding training webinars introducing the new standards.

The learning progressions within ELDS promote:

- Equity for *all* children, through the setting of high, but appropriate, expectations;
- High-quality early learning experiences, by providing clear goals and trajectories of learning;
- Provision of individual support, based on each child's growth and development;
- Families' understanding of what their children are learning and how they can support them;
- Teachers' understanding of age-appropriate content and approaches to children's learning; and,
- Communication across sectors, based upon these common goals for children.

The ELDS were developed through the work of the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet and its Early Learning Standards Workgroup. In addition, over 100 state and national experts participated in some way during the development process, helping to ensure a strong and comprehensive set of Early Learning Standards for Connecticut.

For more information about the ELDS, go to www.ct.gov/oec/elds.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Continuing to improve the quality of interactions between adults and children is a priority for the Office of Early Childhood in the coming year. Towards that end, the Office plans to create a seamless, integrated and transparent system for technical assistance across the state. Staff will review the current methods of technical assistance delivery, examine existing regulations and funding, and design a more efficient and effective system for providing valuable technical assistance to programs, providers, communities and families.



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