

# Connecticut Office of Early Childhood



Connecticut Office of  
Early Childhood

## *At a Glance*

**DAVID WILKINSON, Commissioner**

***Established* – June 24, 2013 by Executive Order No. 35**

***Statutory authority* – Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 10-500 (P.A. 14-39 – An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education and Concerning Dyslexia and Special Education)**

***Central office* – 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103**

***Number of employees* – 110**

***Recurring operating expenses* -**

**Federal: \$60,687,083**

**State: \$297,571,252**

**Bond Funds: \$5,715,641**

## ***Organizational structure* -**

- **Commissioner's Office**
- **Division of Early Care and Education**
- **Division of Quality Improvement**
- **Division of Family Support**
- **Division of Licensing**

## **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.

## **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.*

## **Statutory Responsibility**

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) was created through Executive Order No. 35, effective June 24, 2013, and statutorily established through Conn. Gen. Statute Sec. 10-500 (P.A. 14-39 – *An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education and Concerning Dyslexia and Special Education.*) As a cabinet-level state agency reporting directly to the Governor, the OEC is the lead agency for early care and education, workforce development, program quality and improvement, child care licensing, and family support. The OEC consolidates the funding streams, programs, and personnel of numerous early childhood services formerly dispersed across the Departments of Education, Public Health, Social Services, Developmental Services and the Board of Regents.

The Office of Early Childhood works to:

- coordinate and improve the delivery of early childhood services for Connecticut children;
- ensure that child care and education programs for young children (1) are safe, healthy, and nurturing, (2) appropriately support children's physical, social and emotional, and cognitive development, and (3) are accessible to all children, particularly those at greater educational risk (including those from families in poverty, families with a single parent, families with limited English proficiency, and parents with less than a high school diploma);
- support families raising young children to ensure the children's health, well-being and positive growth and development; and,
- build and support a high-quality early childhood workforce.

## **OEC Program Divisions and Functions**

### **Commissioner's Office**

The Commissioner's Office assures that agency-wide administrative activities are coordinated and accomplished in an effective and efficient manner. The office provides the following services across the agency:

#### **Business Operations**

The Office of Childhood manages a large portion of the day-to-day fiscal functions, budgeting, reporting and year-end responsibilities for both state and federal funds. The Office of Early Childhood continues to work closely with the State Department of Education in maintaining OEC fiscal and IT responsibilities.

Information technology staff supports the purchasing and deployment of all necessary software and hardware to all divisions within the OEC. IT staff works to coordinate the inventorying, migration of IT systems from other agencies, user support, hardware imaging, security, deployment of hardware for new staff, and hardware testing and maintenance.

#### **Communications**

Communications responsibilities include: public information, media relations, issues management and public affairs, website and social media, internal communications and crisis and emergency risk communications. These activities serve to support the agency's reputation as the state's leader in early childhood service delivery, policy and advocacy.

#### **Government and Community Relations**

The Government and Community Relations arm of the OEC is responsible for legislative and policy information, including:

- Serving as the OEC commissioner's liaison to the General Assembly, Executive Branch and congressional delegation.
- Outreach to early childhood organizations to build communication and collaboration.
- Development and implementation of OEC legislative agenda.
- Tracking and analysis of early childhood-related legislation.
- Ensuring implementation of approved legislation.
- Responding to legislative inquiries.
- Preparing OEC legislative testimony and reports.
- Coordinating OEC participation in legislative workgroups and task forces.

#### **Legal Office**

Legal office staff is responsible for managing the day-to-day legal functions of the agency. Legal office attorneys assist the different divisions with advice regarding contracts, grant awards, program administration, discrimination complaints, audits, confidentiality requirements, ethics requirements, records retention, legislation, regulations, and other matters as they arise.

The background check unit processes approximately 12,000 background check requests per year pertaining to child care staff. The professional and para-professional staff serve as hearing officers in over 100 Care 4 Kids child care subsidy hearings per year. The attorneys represent the agency in approximately 12 child care license revocation hearings per year, with the paralegals serving as administrative staff in those hearings. In addition, staff manages approximately 200 yearly licensing enforcement cases and respond to approximately 50 freedom of information (FOI) requests annually.

## **Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning helps identify the organizational needs of the agency and develop solutions to emerging challenges and opportunities. It undertakes organizational assessments, facilitates priority setting and spearheads new organization-wide initiatives. Strategic planning also provides expertise in performance measurement and management, strategic communications and organizational change to help ensure the activities of the OEC are efficient and effective and staff are well managed and supported to accomplish the work of the agency.

### **Division of Early Care and Education**

The Division of Early Care and Education oversees and monitors state and federal grants, contracts and subsidies that support early care and education programs. The unit is required to ensure the funds are administered efficiently and are used for the purposes intended. These funds include:

- Child Day Care Program
- School Readiness
- Smart Start Program
- State Head Start Supplement Program
- Care 4 Kids Subsidy Program
- Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Program
- Minor Capital Improvements

### **Child Day Care Program**

Child Day Care programs provide early care and education to infants and toddlers, preschoolers and/or school age children who meet certain eligibility requirements, including incomes below 75% of the state median income. These programs are located in towns and cities across Connecticut. Section 8-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) specifies that the purpose of this funding is for the development and operation of child day care centers for children disadvantaged by reasons of economic, social or environmental conditions pursuant. The services provided through the Child Day Care contracts are supported through both state and federal funds. Enrollment is conducted at individual programs.

| <b>CHILD DAY CARE PROGRAM</b> |       |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Number of Communities         | 47    |
| Number of Programs            | 50    |
| Number of Sites               | 105   |
| Infant/Toddler Full-Time      | 1,219 |
| Preschool Full-Time           | 2,128 |
| School-Age Full-Time          | 229   |
| School-Age Part-Time          | 213   |

### **School Readiness**

School Readiness is a state-funded initiative that offers a network of school readiness programs to provide open access for children to quality programs that: 1) promotes the health and safety of children and prepares them for formal schooling; 2) provides opportunities for parents to choose among affordable and accredited programs; 3) encourages coordination and cooperation among programs and prevents the duplication of services; 4) recognizes the specific service needs and unique resources available to particular municipalities and provides flexibility in the implementation of programs; 5) prevents or minimizes the potential for developmental delays in children prior to their reaching the age of five; 6) enhances federally funded school readiness programs; 7) strengthens the family through: (a) encouragement of parental involvement in a child's development and education; and (b) enhancement of a family's capacity to meet the special needs of their children, including children with disabilities; and (c) reducing educational costs by decreasing the need for special education. The School Readiness Program is comprised of both Priority and Competitive Communities as defined in legislation, Sec. 10-16p.

| <b>SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM</b> |          |             |
|---------------------------------|----------|-------------|
|                                 | Priority | Competitive |
| Number of Communities           | 47       | 20          |
| Number of Programs              | 145      | 79          |
| Number of Sites                 | 237      | 88          |
| Full-Day Spaces                 | 7,186    | 680         |
| School-Day Spaces               | 1,572    | 249         |
| Part-Day Spaces                 | 1,533    | 553         |
| Extended-Day Spaces             | 490      | NA          |

### **Smart Start**

Smart Start reimburses 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. Funds for the Smart Start Program are through the Federal Tobacco Settlement Fund and State Bond Funds.

**SMART START**

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Number of School Districts | 18  |
| Number of Classrooms       | 38  |
| Children Served            | 521 |

### **State Head Start Supplement**

Head Start is funded directly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and provides comprehensive child and family services to low-income families with children ages 3- to 5-years-old. Head Start is federally funded to serve 4,975 children and through the State Head Start Supplement, Connecticut provides supplemental funding to 11 of the 20 federally funded Head Start grantees to increase capacity by 267 preschool-aged children. These funds also support quality enhancement activities in Head Start programs.

| <b>STATE HEAD START SUPPLEMENT</b> |                         |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Town</b>                        | <b>Number of Spaces</b> |
| Bridgeport                         | 20                      |
| Stamford                           | 20                      |
| Norwalk                            | 15                      |
| Danbury                            | 18                      |
| East Hartford                      | 36                      |
| Manchester                         | 15                      |
| Meriden                            | 18                      |
| New London                         | 46                      |
| New Haven                          | 29                      |
| New Britain                        | 34                      |
| West Haven                         | 16                      |

Early Head Start (EHS) is funded directly by the U.S. Department of HHS to provide year-round comprehensive child and family services to low-income pregnant women and families with children birth to 3 years old. EHS settings include center-based, family child care and home-based (home visiting). EHS grantees serve 1,020 families, of which 50 are pregnant women. Through the EHS-Child Care Partnership, 222 additional families are served in center-based and family child care settings.

Total state and federal funding of Head Start, Early Head Start and Head Start Collaboration activities in Connecticut was just over \$69 million in 2016.

### **Care 4 Kids Subsidy Program**

The Care 4 Kids (C4K) subsidy program helps low- to moderate-income families in Connecticut pay for child care costs for children birth to age 13. The program is a partnership between the State of Connecticut, the families in the program and the providers who take care of the children.

A combination of state and federal funds supports the Care 4 Kids subsidy program. In FY 16, 35,222 children were served by 8,262 providers. Subsidy benefits totaled \$114,824,162.

In FY 16, a redesigned website was launched which included a secure provider interactive portal featuring online invoicing, increased self-service opportunities and electronic document submission. Due to new federal requirements that have increased the cost for care per enrolled family coupled with new additional funding, enrollment has been frozen to new families except those families enrolled in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

**Early Head Start Child Care Partnership**

Early Head Start (EHS) is funded directly by the U.S. Department of HHS to provide year-round comprehensive child and family services to low-income pregnant women and families with children birth to 3 years old. EHS settings include center-based, family child care and home-based (home visiting). Three EHS CT grantees were awarded a federal grant to partner with home-based and center-based child care programs to provide comprehensive services based on the EHS model. The OEC provides \$1,130,750 of state funds to support children in the three federally funded EHS-CC Grant Partnership Programs whose families are not eligible for the Care4Kids subsidy program.

**Minor Capital Improvements**

Minor Capital Improvements through state bond funding provide facility improvements and repair needs in (that portion of) facilities that house school readiness programs and state-funded child day care centers. Funding priority is given to community-based early care and education programs located outside of public school buildings, although school-based programs may also apply for projects not covered by the state’s public school constructions program.

| <b>MINOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM</b> |              |
|---|--------------|
| Number of Communities                     | 69           |
| Number of Programs                        | 111          |
| Number of Sites                           | 156          |
| Number of State-Funded Spaces             | 8,888        |
| Total Funded Amount                       | \$14,765,894 |

**Division of Quality Improvement**

The Division of Quality Improvement is made up of five units:

- Workforce Registry
- Workforce Professional Development
- Standards, Instruction and Assessment
- Data and Accountability
- Head Start State Collaboration Office

### **Workforce Registry Unit**

Registry staff housed in this unit are responsible for the Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Registry, including uploading and coding professional development qualifications, administering scholarship funds, processing licensing Head Teacher, ECTC and Technical Assistance Provider applications, providing career counseling, supporting program requirements, and other key functions to support individuals and programs.

### **Workforce Development Unit**

The Workforce Development Unit oversees systems, policies and practices to support the goal of developing a highly qualified and effective workforce for all children birth to age five. Collaborative partners include higher education institutions, professional development providers and members of the early childhood workforce.

### **Standards, Instruction and Assessment Unit**

The Standards, Instruction and Assessment Unit supports programs, families, providers, and communities to help young children grow and learn using the Cycle of Intentional Teaching as a Framework. Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) provide common language around what children from birth to age five should know and be able to do. Instruction and assessment is composed of planning experiences to support children's development, gathering information about how they are progressing and adjusting what is being done to support them based upon this information.

### **Data & Accountability**

The Data & Accountability Coordinator works to increase the knowledge of OEC data metrics and performance measures. The coordinator is responsible for data reports issued by OEC and works with OEC staff and other state agencies in identifying linkages between programs, required reporting elements and data fields, to help provide direction and perspective in the development of the Early Childhood Information System (ECIS).

### **Head Start State Collaboration Office**

The Director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office facilitates state-level collaboration between Head Start/Early Head Start and state agencies and entities that carry out activities designed to benefit low-income pregnant women, children from birth to school entry, and their families.

### **Division of Family Supports**

The Division of Family Supports is responsible for the administration of several major state and federally funded initiatives to strengthen the capacity of families to meet the developmental and health related needs of their infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities, and to prevent child abuse and neglect by helping families and communities be responsive to children, ensuring their positive growth and development. These efforts include contracting with a broad range of organizations to implement evidence-based programs to families and their children; collaborating with community stakeholders; funding innovations in the field and conducting research to assess the effectiveness of programs and developing strategies for improvement.

Some of the division's major programs have been researched and evaluated by the University of Hartford Center for Social Research. The evaluation is a vital ingredient in the development of the division's programs and has consistently shown that the programs are making a positive difference in the lives of the children and families that participate.

Programs within the Division of Family Supports include:

- **Connecticut Birth to Three System** - *Birth to Three* supports families in meeting the needs of their infants and toddlers who are eligible due to significant developmental disabilities or delays. Families are coached on methods for fostering learning during daily routines in the home, child care settings or other places that are natural for that child and family. All children referred to *Birth to Three* are evaluated in five developmental areas. Eligible children who are 16 months old or older are also screened for autism. Each eligible child will have a family service plan that is tailored to that child's needs and the family's priorities, resources and concerns.
- **Help Me Grow** - Help Me Grow is a program for children up to age 5 experiencing the challenges of growing up. It provides parents and providers access to a variety of community resources that address a child's behavioral or developmental needs. Help Me Grow also provides access to monitoring of child development through the Ages and Stages and Ages and Stages- Social Emotional assessments.
- **Mind Over Mood Initiative (MoMs) In-Home Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**. The division supports the training of community providers to address maternal depression via in home supports that are paid for by Medicaid and some commercial insurance.
- **Home visiting** programs funded through state and federal funds.
  - State funded: Nurturing Families Network using the Parents as Teachers model.
  - Federally funded by the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) grant program includes four models: Child First, Early Head Start, Nurse Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers.
- **Healthy Start** provides health-related case management, care coordination, and Husky-A presumptive eligibility application. Services are provided to eligible pregnant women and children up to three years old. The overall goals of this initiative are to reduce, to the extent possible, infant mortality and morbidity and low birth weight.
- **Triple P – Positive Parenting Program**. Triple P aims to build positive behaviors in children, confidence in parents' abilities, and community support for raising children.
- **Training Programs:**
  - Family Development Training and Credentialing. The training program teaches students and human service providers a strength-based approach to working with families and communities. In collaboration with the University of Connecticut Center for the Study of Culture, Health and Human Development, the Trust Fund provides this accessible, community-centered family development training that focuses on the skills needed to help families attain healthy self-reliance.
  - TouchPoints - *Touchpoints* is a registered training program from the Brazelton Center. *Touchpoints* builds on existing provider experience and education to enhance practice and service delivery

## **Division of Licensing**

The Division of Licensing is responsible for administering the Child Care Licensing and Youth Camp Licensing Programs. Family child care homes, group child care homes, child care centers and youth camps are required to be licensed. The child care licensing specialists and supervisors, nurses, health program staff, administrative and support staff assure that licensed child care facilities and youth camps operate at or above the required standards established by state statutes and regulations. This is accomplished through technical assistance, application processing, facility monitoring, complaint investigation and enforcement activities. The Division licenses more than 4,000 child care facilities and youth camps.

## **Improvements/Achievements 2016-2017**

### **Government Efficiency and Performance**

- The Office of Early Childhood moved from multiple different locations into one single location, improving staff relations, communication, and workplace efficiency.
- For OEC licensing staff, cell phones were updated and the service provider was changed, which resulted in the elimination of overage charges, decreased service charges and improved signal strength resulting in greater functionality in the field.
- The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities voted December 14, 2016 to approve OEC's Affirmative Action Plan.

### **Licensing**

- Revisions to the youth camp licensing regulations were presented to the Regulations Review Committee and revisions were made for final approval. Draft revisions to the child care center/group child care home and family child care home regulations are complete and ready to move to the approval process.
- On-site health and safety inspections of all license-exempt center-based child care and youth camp programs receiving Care 4 Kids subsidy was implemented to comply with the new federal mandates of the Child Care and Developmental Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 designed to improve the health, safety and quality of care for children in child care settings.
- Protocol was updated with the Department of Public Health to address the identification of lead-based paint in child care centers and group child care homes. Staff was trained on the protocol. A project was implemented to confirm that documentation is on file that verifies all licensed programs have met lead inspection requirements and necessary data has been entered into the licensing data system to ensure ongoing monitoring.
- Online videos were created for family child care home providers designed to assist individuals completing the licensure process and support licensed providers in maintaining compliance with the licensing regulations.

- A process was developed for the referral of licensed child care programs to receive assistance from outside consultants to improve performance and compliance with licensing requirements. Training was provided to consultants on the licensing process, licensing regulations and referral process.
- Support was provided to statewide efforts to implement the Open Data Portal by identifying the specific licensing data to be available to the public and establishing the titles for the data sets.

#### Criminal background checks

- Background check processing was prioritized for family home child care applicants by creating separate transmittals with a note to state police: "Please Prioritize If Possible."
- A survey was added to fingerprint rejection letters, which asks questions about where the applicant had his/her fingerprints taken. This information is being compiled to determine whether rejections are coming from one particular location to facilitate taking steps to address issues.
- A fingerprint training pilot program was implemented to train child care center directors to fingerprint their own staff to reduce the loss of staff time spent traveling to get fingerprints taken, reduce the expense for fingerprint fees, and to help reduce fingerprint rejection rates.

#### Care 4 Kids Hearings

- The Care 4 Kids Access database was updated and a spreadsheet was created to track hearing officers' hearing status and decisions.

#### Child Care Licensing Enforcement

- Checklists were created for OEC staff to streamline opening and closing of licensing enforcement cases.
- An internal database was updated with notes for supervisors and licensing staff to check the status of a licensing enforcement case.

#### Early Care and Education

- Under the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) OEC provides 740 high-quality preschool spaces in 13 communities across the state; 439 of these spaces are expansion/new spaces, and 301 are existing state funded pre-k spaces that have been improved. High-quality elements of the pre-k programs funded with this grant include increased qualifications for teaching staff and salaries comparable to K-12 salaries, early childhood mental health services provided by the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP), individualized coaching for instructional staff, increased

opportunities for family engagement and comprehensive services for children and their families (i.e. screenings, nutrition, services that enhance family well-being etc.).

- A total of \$3,324,046 was awarded to 24 local boards of education to increase access to high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds through Smart Start. This funding has allowed ongoing support for 38 preschool classrooms and the addition of 7 new preschool classrooms in public schools serving 665 children. An additional \$713,689 in bond funding was awarded to boards of education for capital improvements in classrooms.
- A total of \$14,765,000 has been funded across 3 cohorts including 69 communities comprised of 111 programs serving almost 9,000 children to help address building and site deficiencies as well as helping to promote the health, safety and learning of children in age-appropriate environments.
- Due to changes in the Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Connecticut requires all Care 4 Kids providers to complete a health and safety orientation and ongoing annual professional development. In order to support providers to meet this requirement, OEC launched an online Health and Safety Orientation which is offered through Child Care Education Institute (CCEI) for family child care and center-based providers. CCEI specializes in providing online training and certificates, childcare registry development, and administrative solutions for the early care and education industry. Once the provider completes the orientation, the provider has access to a training library to continue professional development for one year. Over 800 subscriptions have been requested.
- Work continues with the University of CT NEAG School of Education to implement the Prek-to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Leadership Program. The 20 participants included early childhood community program directors, school district central office administrators and elementary school principals. This ten-month long executive style learning program covers modules on curriculum and instruction, assessment practices with young children and evaluation of teachers and programs and leading for equity, excellent and early success.
- The partnership with the CT Birth to Grade Three Leaders group which serves as a catalyst to ensure a coherent Birth to Grade Three system promoting optimal growth, development, education, support, and best practices for children, families, educators, and leaders. Leaders from local education agencies, OEC, State Department of Education, principal and superintendent membership organizations, philanthropy, Regional Education Service Centers, the Achievement Gap Commission and early childhood advocacy currently comprise the membership.

Improving Quality through Thrive!

Thrive! is the umbrella for Connecticut’s Quality Recognition and Improvement System. The Office of Early Childhood contracts with the United Way of CT to provide professional development, technical assistance, and credentialing! Initiatives undertaken through Thrive! are listed below.

- The OEC’s Program Leadership Initiative offered seven courses for the Connecticut Director Credential. Of the 143 participants, 126 individuals successfully completed the courses. All attendees were individuals currently holding leadership positions within Connecticut programs for young children.
- The Accreditation Quality Improvement Support (AQIS) provided individualized on-site support to 157 licensed and licensed-exempt programs actively pursuing national accreditation and assisted 25 programs in achieving accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Seven NAEYC overview sessions were conducted for 29 participants.

Connecticut has moved from third to fourth in the country for the number of NAEYC Accredited programs, surpassed by the efforts of the state of Minnesota, which expanded its accreditation support initiative to help programs achieve the highest level of their quality rating system.

The chart below highlights the percentage of accredited programs in Connecticut for the last three years.

| Year | # of Accredited Programs | # of Center-Based Programs | % of Accredited Programs |
|------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2017 | 492                      | 2091                       | 24%                      |
| 2016 | 481                      | 2025                       | 24%                      |
| 2015 | 475                      | 2044                       | 23%                      |

- The Provider Orientation Project for family child care providers ran 126 orientation sessions serving 1,754 participants throughout the state. Topics including health and safety, child development and child care licensing requirements, process and benefits. These free sessions meet the orientation requirements for Care 4 Kids subsidy providers. At the end of each session, each provider receives a health and safety kits containing a fire extinguisher, carbon monoxide and smoke alarm detectors, first aid kit, and developmentally appropriate program supplies.
- 2-1-1 Child Care assisted 18 child care programs through the Family Child Care Career Support Project through 23 trainings reaching 225 parents. Topics of the parent trainings included Music and Movement, Self Help Skills and Water Play. An additional 31 provider trainings were conducted on topics such as Guiding Behavior and Art for Young Children.

- One session of Pyramid/ELDS Train the Trainer and one session of ELDS Train the Trainer were conducted reaching a total of 57 participants. The Pyramid Model framework gives teachers and home visitors concrete strategies for promoting healthy social-emotional development of infants through preschoolers. CT's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) describe developmental learning progressions for children ages birth through five. It can be used as a guide for planning activities, but is a framework and not a curriculum.
- Thrive! conducted 44 professional development sessions reaching 157 participants around the topics of Bring out the Leader in You, Code of Ethics, Record Keeping, Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAPP-SAC) and Pyramid training. Additionally, 60 on-site NAP SACC site visits were conducted to participating programs.
- Health and Safety trainings were conducted, including 77 CPR and First Aid with 447 individuals participating and 52 Medication Administration with 267 individuals participating.
- Adult Learning Theory I, II and III trainings were conducted through 3 sessions reaching 54 participants.
- Thrive! responded to 28 requests for License Compliance Technical Assistance for child care programs.

#### Other Early Childhood Quality Initiatives

- A total of \$629,524 in scholarship assistance was provided to individuals pursuing competency development, including associate's and bachelor's degree and meeting state and national educator requirements. Scholarship funds are available via the Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Registry.
- Connecticut's Core Knowledge and Competency Framework for the role of teachers across all types of early childhood settings was completed. Frameworks are being created for Home Visitors, Birth to Three consultants, and Technical Assistance providers.
- The Head Start State Collaboration Office partnered with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to enroll DCF staff and their Early Head Start community partners in eight days of training in infant mental health from the CT Association of Infant Mental Health. Much of that training has been incorporated in DCF's early childhood practice guide. A partnership with the Department of Public Health (DPH) WIC program resulted in co-location of five WIC offices and Head Start programs to offer easier WIC access to Head Start families. A partnership with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DHMAS) and DCF and seven Head Start/Early Head Start grantees resulted in child-proofing seven Women's Residential Programs, enrolling 62 children/families in Head Start/Early Head Start, and developing cross-sector collaboration.

## Family Support Services

### *MIECHV Innovation Award*

The Family Support division was awarded a Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting MIECHV Innovation Award to support workforce development of home visitors across Connecticut. Home visitors are partnering with the Center for Early Childhood Education (CECE) at Eastern Connecticut State University in videotaping of home visitation activities in order to create online learning modules for professional learning.

The series of modules being developed will include content on:

- Trauma-informed care
- Infant mental health
- Safe sleep practices
- Promoting child development and learning from a multicultural perspective
- Preventing childhood obesity
- Communicating with families and building relationships using Motivational Interviewing
- Supporting families facing complex issues such as: cognitive limitations, domestic violence, and substance abuse

### *Touchpoints Training*

OEC remains a Brazelton Touchpoints Site, affiliated with the National Touchpoint Center based in the Division of Developmental Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital, a Harvard Medical School teaching hospital. Four trainings were offered to home visiting staff and a total of 86 individuals completed the training and subsequent mentoring sessions.

Brazelton Touchpoints Individual Level training is a multi-day training followed by six months of mentoring that offers skills and strategies to help providers support the parent-child relationship and the development of healthy functioning families. By helping parents identify and expect bursts and regressions in child behavior Touchpoint professionals can reduce parental frustration and self-doubt while fostering parenting skills and the parents enjoyment of their child. In the process, the bond between the provider and the family is strengthened.

### *Family Development*

In collaboration with the University of Connecticut Center for the Study of Culture, Health and Human Development, the Family Services division provides family development training that focuses on the skills needed to help families attain healthy self-reliance. The program offers an 80-hour course for family service providers and a 35-hour program for family service supervisors, managers, policymakers and executive directors.

