



Agency Legislative Proposal

2026 Session

General Information

Agency	Office of Early Childhood
Proposal Name	Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood
Legislative Liaison	Maggie Adair
Division Requesting Proposal	N/A
Drafter	Maggie Adair, Liz Proietti, Kimberly Paluska, Michelle Levy, Cynthia Watts-Elder, Gabriela Sandoval, Marybeth Miller, Laura Murphy

Overview

Brief Summary of Proposal

This legislative package has 6 sections: **1)** Add a pediatrician as a member of the Early Childhood Cabinet, **2)** Amend Smart Start language to increase the per child rate to \$6,500 and to allow for \$97,500 per classroom (15 children), **3)** Clarify the definition of day camp in licensing statutes, **4)** Add a new section to the youth camp licensing statutes concerning notification of emergency situations to licensees of youth camps, **5)** Clarify the age of a household member in a family child care home, **6)** specify defined categories of people who require a fingerprint supported background check.

What problem is this proposal looking to solve?

See the rationale in section by section summary.

How does the proposal solve the problem?

See the rationale in section by section summary.

Section by section summary:

Section #(s)	Section Summary
1	Section 10-16z(a) - Add a pediatrician as a member of the Early Childhood Cabinet.

Rationale: A pediatrician, with a wealth of knowledge and expertise about early childhood health and developmental outcomes, could contribute to the discussion and work of the Early Childhood Cabinet.

2 Sec. 10-506(a) – Amend language to increase the per child rate to \$6,500 and to allow for \$97,500 per classroom (15 children).

Rationale: The Smart Start per child and classroom rate has not changed since its establishment on July 1, 2014. The increased payment rates provide an incentive for current public school district Smart Start grantees to remain as participants in the program and for new public school districts to join as grantees of Smart Start. The FY27 allocation for the Smart Start line item was increased and passed in the final budget, P.A. 25-168.

3 Section 19a – 420(3) – Clarify the definition of day camp.

Rationale: Youth camps provide structured environments where children and youth participate in recreational, educational, or enrichment activities. Currently, a youth camp license is only required of programs that operate for three or more days per week if they go through a meal period. This exposes children who attend a program that does not go through a meal period to a lack of oversight.

Licensed youth camp operators that operate three or more days per week where children eat lunch must ensure adequate staff-to-child ratios, mandated reporter training, background check requirements, first aid and CPR training, emergency preparedness training, a safe physical environment and appropriate sanitation, among other things. Programs that operate from 9 am – 1 pm but send children home for lunch can circumvent basic health and safety standards required of other programs that allow for a traditional mid-day meal.

Requiring a license of camps for this duration creates a level playing field across providers, preventing unlicensed operators from circumventing safety requirements while competing with licensed programs. Oversight of these programs would establish accountability, complaint investigation processes, and enforcement mechanisms to protect children and reassure families.

4 New – Add a new section to the youth camp statutes concerning notification of emergency situations to licensees of youth camps.

Rationale: Notification of emergency situations is in statute for licensees of child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes. The same protection should apply to youth camps to help ensure the health and safety of staff and children.

5 **Section CGS 19a-87e(a):** Clarify the age of a household member in a licensed family child care home.

Rationale: The proposed change to CGS19a-87e(a), where household member is currently defined as being sixteen years of age or older, references that household member is defined in 19a-87b(c), where household member is eighteen years of age or older. P.A. 21-172 amended 19a-87b, Subsec. (c) by replacing "sixteen" with "eighteen" but did not make conforming changes to 19a-87e(a).

6 **Section 10-530:** Specify defined categories of people who require a fingerprint supported background check.

Rationale: The proposed changes are necessary to comply with federal requirements governing the use of fingerprints for criminal-history background checks. Under federal requirements, most notably the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services standards, state agencies must meet certain specific criteria before accessing

national criminal-history databases or submitting fingerprints for non-criminal-justice purposes.

Federal law requires a clear and specific statutory mandate authorizing fingerprint-based background checks. The FBI determined an OEC existing law, as written, was not specific enough in terms of defined categories of people who require a fingerprint supported background check. Although our regulations provide many of the required definitions, without clear and comprehensive *statutory* definitions, OEC cannot qualify to receive fingerprint-based criminal-history information.

DESPP has reviewed our added definitions and proposed legislative changes and believes these changes, if enacted, will satisfy the FBI and federal requirements.

Statutory Reference (if any): CGS 10-16z(a); 10-506(a); 19a-420(3); 19a-87e(a); 10-530

Background

New Proposal

Resubmission

If resubmission, please provide details below. Please also note any changes made since the last submission:

Bill #(s)	Reason bill(s) did not move forward

Have there been any changes in federal laws or regulations that make this legislation necessary?

No

Have there been any changes in state laws or regulations that make this legislation necessary?

No

Has this proposal or a similar proposal been implemented in other states?

No Unknown

Have certain constituencies called for this proposal?

Yes There have been suggestions to add a member of the medical community serving children age birth to five to the Early Childhood Cabinet.

Interagency Impact

Check here if this proposal does NOT impact other agencies

Agency	Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection	
Contact	Versie Jones, Law Enforcement Systems Analyst	
Date Contacted	9/30/2025	
Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Unresolved
Open Issues		

Fiscal Impact

No Fiscal Impact

Budget Option Submitted

Include the section number(s) which have a fiscal impact and the anticipated impact:

State Section 2 amends Smart Start language to increase the per child rate to \$6,500 and to allow for \$97,500 per classroom (15 children). The FY27 allocation for the Smart Start line item was increased and passed in the final budget, P.A. 25-168. Therefore, there is no NEW fiscal impact.

Municipal

No

Federal

No

Other Information

If there is any additional information we should know, please detail below: N/A

Legislative Language

Insert fully drafted bill below. Please use standard legislative drafting considerations, as published by LCO [here](#).

Section 1:

Section (a) of 10-6z of the general statutes, as amended by Public Act 25-143, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from July 1, 2026*):

(a) There is established the Early Childhood Cabinet. The cabinet shall consist of: (1) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's designee, (2) the Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee, (3) the Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's designee, (4) the chancellor of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, or the chancellor's designee, (5) the Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's designee, (6) the Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the commissioner's designee, (7) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee, (8) the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity or the executive director's designee, (9) the project director of the Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office, (10) a parent or guardian of a child who attends or attended a school readiness program appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, (11) a representative of a local provider of early childhood education appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, (12) a representative of the Connecticut Family Resource Center Alliance appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, (13) a representative of a state-funded child care center appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, (14) two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a member of a board of education for a town designated as an alliance district, as defined in section 10-262u, and one of whom is a parent who has a child attending a school in an educational reform district, as defined in section 10-262u, (15) two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of an association of early education and child care providers and one of whom is a representative of a public elementary school with a prekindergarten program, (16) **[ten] eleven** appointed by the Governor, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Head Start Association, one of whom is a representative of the business community in this state, one of whom is a representative of the philanthropic community in this state, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut State Employees Association, one of whom is an administrator of the child care development block grant pursuant to the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, one of whom is responsible for administering grants received under section 1419 of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1419, as amended

from time to time, one of whom is responsible for administering the provisions of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 USC 6301 et seq., one of whom is responsible for coordinating education services to children and youth who are homeless, one of whom is a licensed family child care home provider and a member of a staffed family child care network identified by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, and one of whom is a parent recommended by a parent advisory group that has been appointed by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, **and a pediatrician.** (17) the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's designee, (18) the Lieutenant Governor, or the Lieutenant Governor's designee, (19) the Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee, and (20) the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or the commissioner's designee.

Section 2:

Section (a) of 10-506 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from July 1, 2026*):

(a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Office of Early Childhood, in consultation with the Department of Education, shall design and administer the Connecticut Smart Start competitive grant program to provide grants to 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. A local or regional board of education may submit an application to the office, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, and may receive (1) a grant for capital expenses in an amount not to exceed seventy-five thousand dollars per classroom for costs related to the renovation of an existing public school to accommodate the establishment or expansion of a preschool program, and (2) an annual grant for operating expenses (A) in an amount not to exceed **five** **six** thousand, **five hundred** dollars per child served by such grant, or (B) in an amount not to exceed **seventy-** **nine-seven thousand**, **five hundred** **thousand** dollars for each preschool classroom. Each local or regional board of education that establishes or expands a preschool program under this section shall be eligible to receive an annual grant for operating expenses for a period of five years, provided such preschool program meets standards established by the Commissioner of Early Childhood. Such local or

regional board of education may submit an application for renewal of such grant to the office.

Section 3:

Section (3) of 19a-420 of the general statutes, as amended by Public Act 25-143, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from July 1, 2026*):

(3) "Day camp" means any youth camp which is established, conducted or maintained during daylight hours for [at least] **a) three or more hours per day for** three days a week with the campers [eating and] sleeping at home, [except for one meal per day,] **or b)** **more than one session per day for two or more hours per session if children are permitted to enroll in more than one session per day,** but does not include programs operated by a municipal agency.

Section 4:

NEW (*Effective October 1, 2026*)

Notification of emergency situations to licensees of youth camps. (a) For purposes of this section, "licensee" means any person licensed pursuant to section 19a-421. (b) Each licensee shall provide written contact information for the licensee's youth camp, including the name, address and telephone number of the youth camp, to the Office of Early Childhood. Each licensee shall verify and update, as appropriate, such contact information. (c) The Office of Early Childhood shall share, in accordance with a memorandum of understanding or other agreement, any information collected pursuant to subsection (b) of this section with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection for use in an emergency notification system, as defined in section 28-25, that notifies licensees of an emergency situation in the vicinity of a youth camp that may endanger the safety or welfare of the children at such youth camp.

Section 5:

Section 19a-87e. (a) The Commissioner of Early Childhood may (1) refuse to license under section 19a-87b, a person to own, conduct, operate or maintain a family child care home, as defined in section 19a-77, (2) refuse to approve under section 19a-87b, a person to act as an assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home, as defined in

section 19a-77, or (3) suspend or revoke the license or approval or take any other action that may be set forth in regulation that may be adopted pursuant to section 19a-79 if the person who owns, conducts, maintains or operates the family child care home, the person who acts as an assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home, a person employed in such family child care home in a position connected with the provision of care to a child receiving child care services or a household member, as defined in subsection (c) of section 19a-87b, who is ~~sixteen~~ **eighteen** years of age or older and resides therein, has been convicted, in this state or any other state of a felony, as defined in section 53a-25, involving the use, attempted use or threatened use of physical force against another person, or has a criminal record in this state or any other state that the commissioner reasonably believes renders the person unsuitable to own, conduct, operate or maintain or be employed by a family child care home, or act as an assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home, or if such persons or a household member has been convicted in this state or any other state of cruelty to persons under section 53-20, injury or risk of injury to or impairing morals of children under section 53-21, abandonment of children under the age of six years under section 53-23, or any felony where the victim of the felony is a child under eighteen years of age, a violation of section 53a-70b of the general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to January 1, 2019, or section 53a-70, 53a-70a, 53a-71, 53a-72a, 53a-72b or 53a-73a, illegal manufacture, distribution, sale, prescription, dispensing or administration under section 21a-277 or 21a-278, or illegal possession under section 21a-279, or if such person, a person who acts as assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home or a person employed in such family child care home in a position connected with the provision of care to a child receiving child care services, either fails to substantially comply with the regulations adopted pursuant to section 19a-87b, or conducts, operates or maintains the home in a manner which endangers the health, safety and welfare of the children receiving child care services. Any refusal of a license or approval pursuant to this section shall be rendered in accordance with the provisions of sections 46a-79 to 46a-81, inclusive. Any person whose license or approval has been revoked pursuant to this section shall be ineligible to apply for a license or approval for a period of one year from the effective date of revocation.

Section 6:

Section 10-530: (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Child care facility" means a "child care center", "group child care home" or "family child care home" that provides "child care services", each as described in section 19a-77, or any provider of child care services under the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 17b-749;

(2) "Child care services provider or staff member" means any person who is (A) a licensee, employee, volunteer or alternate staff, staff, program staff, assistant, substitute, or household member of a child care facility, (B) a family child care provider, or (C) a any other person who provides child care services under the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 17b-749 but does not include a person who is providing child care services under the child care subsidy program (i) exclusively to children with whom such person is related, and (ii) without being issued a license to provide child care services by the Office of Early Childhood; and

(3) "Family child care provider" means any person who provides child care services under the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 17b-749 (A) in a family child care home, as defined in section 19a-77, or (B) in a home not requiring a license pursuant to subdivision (4) of subsection (b) of section 19a-77.

(b) The comprehensive background checks required pursuant to subsection (c) of section 19a-80, subsection (c) of section 19a-87b and subsection (a) of section 17b-749k, shall be conducted at least once every five years for each child care services provider or staff member [in accordance with the provisions of 45 CFR 98.43, as amended from time to time.] and shall include a national and state criminal history records check conducted in accordance with section 29-17a, a state and national sex offender registry check pursuant to section 54-250, a Connecticut child abuse or neglect registry check as established under section 17a-101k and a check of any other state's child abuse registry where such provider or staff member resided within the last five years.

(c) Any person who applies for a position at a child care facility in the state shall not be required to submit to such comprehensive background checks if such person (1) is an employee of a child care facility in the state, or has not been separated from employment as a child care services provider or staff member in the state for a period of more than one hundred eighty days, and (2) has successfully completed such comprehensive

background checks in the previous five years. Nothing in this section prohibits the Commissioner of Early Childhood from requiring that a person applying for a position as a child care services provider or staff member submit to comprehensive background checks more than once during a five-year period.

(d) Any person required to submit to comprehensive background checks pursuant to subsection (c) of section 19a-80, subsection (c) of section 19a-87b, and subsection (a) of section 17b-749k, may submit a request, in writing, to the Commissioner of Early Childhood for a waiver of the requirement to submit fingerprints. Such request shall include such person's name and date of birth, and evidence that such person is unable to satisfy such fingerprints requirement due to a medical condition, including, but not limited to, a birth defect, physical deformity, skin condition or psychiatric condition. Upon the granting of a waiver to a person under this subsection, the Office of Early Childhood shall conduct a state criminal history records check of such person by using the name and date of birth that was provided in the request for a waiver by such person.

(4) "Licensee" as used in this section means any person licensed under sections 19a-80 or 19a-87b to provide child care services;

(5) "Employee" as used in this section means any person paid to work for a family child care provider as a substitute or assistant or as staff or program staff in a child care center or group child care home;

(6) "Volunteer" as used in this section means any person, who is not an employee of a child care center or group child care home, and whose activities involve the direct care of children or who have the opportunity for unsupervised access to children;

(7) "Staff" as used in this section means any person employed by the child care center or group child care home, sixteen years of age or older, that is not responsible for providing direct care of children or does not have unsupervised access to children;

(8) "Program staff" as used in this section means any person employed by the child care center or group child care home, sixteen years of age or older, responsible for the direct care of children;

(9) "Assistant" as used in this section means any person who has been approved pursuant to section 19a-87b to provide child care services in a family child care home;

(10) "Substitute" as used in this section means any person who has been approved pursuant to section 19a-87b to provide child care services in a family child care home; and

(11) "Household member" as used in this section means any person, other than the licensee, who resides in the family child care home who is 18 years of age or older.

(c) Any person who applies for a position at a child care facility in the state shall not be required to submit to such comprehensive background checks if such person (1) is an employee of a child care facility in the state, or has not been separated from employment as a child care services provider or staff member in the state for a period of more than one hundred eighty days, and (2) has successfully completed such comprehensive background checks in the previous five years. Nothing in this section prohibits the Commissioner of Early Childhood from requiring that a person applying for a position as a child care services provider or staff member submit to comprehensive background checks more than once during a five-year period.

(d) Any person required to submit to comprehensive background checks pursuant to subsection (c) of section 19a-80, subsection (c) of section 19a-87b, and subsection (a) of section 17b-749k, may submit a request, in writing, to the Commissioner of Early Childhood for a waiver of the requirement to submit fingerprints. Such request shall include such person's name and date of birth, and evidence that such person is unable to satisfy such fingerprints requirement due to a medical condition, including, but not limited to, a birth defect, physical deformity, skin condition or psychiatric condition. Upon the granting of a waiver to a person under this subsection, the Office of Early Childhood shall conduct a state criminal history records check of such person by using the name and date of birth that was provided in the request for a waiver by such person



Agency Legislative Proposal

2026 Session

General Information

Agency	Office of Early Childhood
Proposal Name	DCF Registry
Legislative Liaison	Maggie Adair
Division Requesting Proposal	N/A
Drafter	Maggie Adair, Liz Proietti, Cynthia Watts-Elder, Marybeth Miller, Laura Murphy

Overview

Brief Summary of Proposal

- 1) Require center and group child care home providers to inform OEC of the placement on the DCF Abuse and Neglect Registry of the owner or anyone employed in a position connected with the provision of care,
- 2) Require any person who applies for or is licensed to operate or approved to act as a staff member in a family child care home to inform the OEC of any criminal conviction or placement on the DCF Abuse and Neglect Registry, to clarify the age of household members who are subject to this same requirement, and to remove language concerning disqualifying crimes to make consistent with child care center requirements.

What problem is this proposal looking to solve?

See the rationale in section by section summary.

How does the proposal solve the problem?

See the rationale in section by section summary.

Section by section summary:

Section #(s)	Section Summary
Sections 1 – 7:	<p>Section 1:</p> <p>Licensing – Section 19a-87a(b): Require center and group child care home providers to inform OEC of the placement on the DCF Abuse and Neglect Registry of the owner or anyone employed in a position connected with the provision of care.</p> <p>Rationale:</p> <p>DCF is statutorily barred from providing the Agency (OEC) with certain information as part of an employment background check, including recommendations for placement on the DCF central registry when that recommendation is within an appeal period or is on appeal. In those instances, the Agency receives clear or “no registry finding” result. The Agency enters the clear result into its background check system. The Agency would not become aware if the applicant was placed on the registry after the appeal period expired or upon exhaustion of all appeals until another background check was conducted, which could be as many as five years later. This gap in information could result in an individual with a registry placement receiving a child care license or approval, or ability to work with children at a program. The proposed changes to the Agency statutes places an affirmative obligation on applicants, operators and providers to notify the Agency when they are placed on the DCF Registry.</p>
	<p>Section 2:</p> <p>Licensing – Section CGS 19a-87e(c): 1) Require any person who applies for or is licensed to operate or approved to act as a staff member in a family child care home to inform the OEC of any criminal conviction or placement on the DCF Abuse and Neglect Registry, to clarify the age of household members who are subject to this same requirement, and 2) remove language concerning disqualifying crimes to make consistent with child care center requirements.</p>
	<p>Rationale:</p>

1) DCF is statutorily barred from providing the Agency with certain information as part of an employment background check, including recommendations for placement on the DCF central registry when that recommendation is within an appeal period or is on appeal. In those instances, the Agency receives clear or “no registry finding” result. The Agency enters the clear result into its background check system. The Agency would not become aware if the applicant was placed on the registry after the appeal period expired or upon exhaustion of all appeals until another background check was conducted, which could be as many as five years later. This gap in information could result in an individual with a registry placement receiving a child care license or approval, or ability to work with children at a program. The proposed changes to the Agency statutes places an affirmative obligation on applicants, operators and providers to notify the Agency when they are placed on the DCF Registry.

In addition, household member is currently defined as being sixteen years of age or older, but also references that household member is defined in 19a-87b(c), where household member is eighteen years of age or older. P.A. 21-172 amended 19a-87b, Subsec. (c) by replacing “sixteen” with “eighteen” but did not make conforming changes to 19a-87e(c).

2) Subsection (c) currently places the responsibility on a family child care provider or approved staff to access and review the Agency’s list to determine if a conviction should be reported to the Agency for further assessment. Removal of this language brings subsection (c) into conformity with the corresponding statute for child care centers and group child care homes, which requires notification to the Agency of any criminal conviction of a person employed by the program thereby placing the responsibility on the Agency for determining if the conviction is on the Agency’s list of criminal convictions and requires further assessment.

Background

New Proposal Resubmission

Have there been any changes in federal laws or regulations that make this legislation necessary?

No

Have there been any changes in state laws or regulations that make this legislation necessary?

No

Has this proposal or a similar proposal been implemented in other states?

No Unknown

Have certain constituencies called for this proposal?

Yes The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) required this change.

Interagency Impact

Check here if this proposal does NOT impact other agencies

Agency	Dept. of Children and Families	
Contact	Susan Hamilton, Interim Commissioner	
Date Contacted	N/A	
Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Unresolved
Open Issues	N/A	

Fiscal Impact

- No Fiscal Impact
- Budget Option Submitted

Include the section number(s) which have a fiscal impact and the anticipated impact:

State

No

Municipal

No

Federal

No

Other Information

If there is any additional information we should know, please detail below: N/A

Legislative Language

Insert fully drafted bill below. Please use standard legislative drafting considerations, as published by LCO [here](#).

Section 1: Section 19a-87a of the Connecticut General Statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2026):

(b): Any person who is licensed to conduct, operate or maintain a child care center or group child care home shall notify the commissioner of any criminal conviction or placement on the Department of Children and Families Abuse and Neglect Registry of the owner, conductor, operator or maintainer of the center or home or of any person employed therein in a position connected with the provision of care to a child receiving child care services, immediately upon obtaining knowledge of the placement or conviction. Failure to comply with the notification requirement may result in the suspension or revocation of the license or the imposition of any action set forth in regulation, and shall subject the licensed person to a civil penalty of not more than one hundred dollars per day for each day after the person obtained knowledge of the placement or conviction.

Section 2: Section 19a-87e of the Connecticut General Statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2026):

(c) Any person who applies or is licensed to conduct, operate or maintain a family child care home or approved to act as an assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home shall notify the commissioner of any criminal conviction or placement on the Department of Children and Families Abuse and Neglect Registry of the owner, conductor, operator or maintainer of the family child care home or of any household member, as defined in subsection (c) of section 19a-87b, who is [sixteen] eighteen years of age or older, or any person employed in such family child care home in a position connected with the provision of care to a child receiving child care services, [of a crime which affects the commissioner's discretion under subsection (a) of this section], immediately upon obtaining knowledge of such placement or conviction. Failure to comply with the notification requirement of this subsection may result in the suspension or revocation of the license or approval or the taking of any other action against a license or approval set forth in regulation adopted pursuant to section 19a-79 and shall subject the licensee or

approved staff member to a civil penalty of not more than one hundred dollars per day for each day after the person obtained knowledge of the placement or conviction.