



Agency Legislative Proposal - 2021 Session

Document Name: Office of Early Childhood Legislative Proposals.doc

(If submitting electronically, please label with date, agency, and title of proposal – 092611_SDE_TechRevisions)

State Agency: Office of Early Childhood

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Lead agency division requesting this proposal: Various

Agency Analyst/Drafter of Proposal: Maggie Adair, Michael Curley, Debra Johnson, Linda Bamonte, Alice Ridgway, Ashley McAuliffe

Title of Proposal: AAC Revisions to Statutes of Early Childhood

Statutory Reference: Various

Section 1:

OEC proposes a set of early care and education legislative changes aimed at accomplishing the following goals:

- Elevate the voices of families with young children to ensure state-funded early care and education is meeting family and community needs.
- Advance racial equity and transparency for accessing child care through changes to School Readiness Councils.
- Create mechanisms to address the dire shortage of high-quality infant and toddler child care in the state.
- Increase financial stability for child care providers that access state and federal funding.

- 1) Amend School Readiness Council membership by increasing parent participation, ensuring the Council make-up reflects the racial diversity of the community, establishing meeting times that accommodate the needs of Council members, adding a local or regional workforce entity and a representative from a local employer, and charging the Council with collaborating with the Office of Early Childhood related to planning improvements to the state early care and education governance structure. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16r.



- 2) Allow the Office of Early Childhood to allocate state funds for licensed family child care services, within available appropriations, to equitably address the shortage of infant and toddler care. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16p, 10-509, and 8-210.
- 3) Allow the Office of Early Childhood to administer School Readiness funds through contracts to reduce burden on providers and agency staff, and align with how other state funding streams are administered. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16p.
- 4) Fiscally stabilize state-funded child care providers by purchasing groups of spaces within available appropriations. (Effective July 1, 2021) Amend Sec. 10-16p.
- 5) Enable communities to best meet family needs by changing the School Readiness age eligibility to include children 6 weeks to up to 5 years of age, allowing them to choose to use state funds to serve infants and toddlers. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16p.
- 6) Add an explicit goal that emphasizes the importance of promoting socio-economic and racial and ethnic diversity among classrooms where children are served and among staff at providers who receive state funding. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16o.

Section 2: Ensure that OEC has access to licensing information to monitor, evaluate and support licensed child care programs. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-500 (10).

Section 3: Prohibit an individual eighteen years of age or older and seeking employment in a licensed group child care home or center from beginning work until that individual's FBI criminal background check is cleared. (Effective October 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 19a-80(c).

Section 4: Change the age of a family child care home household member who must submit to a comprehensive background check from age 16 to 18. (Effective October 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 19a-87b(c).

Section 5: Require licensed youth camp staff age 18 and older to submit to a background check, based on name and date of birth. (Effective October 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 19a-421.

Section 6: Provide the Commissioner the authority to waive fingerprints for individuals medically unavailable due to a variety of medical conditions. (Effective October 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-530(d).

Section 7: Delete reference to "Nurturing Families Network" and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System; update the purpose of Connecticut's home visiting system. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 17b-751b.

Section 8: Delete reference to "Nurturing Families Network" and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System; delete references to (B) Family Empowerment Initiative; (D) Family School Connection, (E)



support services for residents of a respite group home for girls; (F) volunteer services, and (I) sexual abuse prevention. Add (E) working with parents who are incarcerated, (F) promoting the work of doulas to help women at highest risk for poor pregnancy outcomes achieve healthy birth outcomes and (G) supporting homeless diversion for families with young children. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 17b-751d.

Section 9: Delete reference to “Nurturing Families Network” and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-509.

Section 10: Delete reference to “Nurturing Families Network” and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 17b – 261.

Section 11: Delete reference to “Nurturing Families Network” and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. Sec. 17b-277a.

Section 12: Permit the Commissioner of Education, upon request of the executive director, program director, or the superintendent of an approved Birth to Three program/employing school district, to allow any individual who holds an endorsement in the areas of 1) comprehensive special education #165 or #065 or #265, 2) partially sighted #055, 3) blind #059, 4) deaf and hard of hearing #057, 5) integrated early childhood and special education #113, to teach infants and toddlers beginning at birth in the CT Birth to Three System. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-145d.

Section 13. Clarify that a person who may be a subject to a civil penalty for operating a youth camp without a license has the right to an administrative hearing in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 54 of the General Statutes. (Effective Upon Passage). Amend Sec. 19a-425.

PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

◇ Reason for Proposal

Please consider the following, if applicable:

- (1) *Have there been changes in federal/state/local laws and regulations that make this legislation necessary?*
- (2) *Has this proposal or something similar been implemented in other states? If yes, what is the outcome(s)?*
- (3) *Have certain constituencies called for this action?*
- (4) *What would happen if this was not enacted in law this session?*

Section 1:

OEC proposes a set of early care and education legislative changes aimed at accomplishing the following goals:



- Elevate the voices of families with young children to ensure state-funded early care and education is meeting family and community needs.
- Advance racial equity and transparency for accessing child care through changes to School Readiness Councils.
- Create mechanisms to address the dire shortage of high-quality infant and toddler child care in the state.
- Increase financial stability for child care providers that access state and federal funding.

1) Amend School Readiness Council membership by increasing parent participation, ensuring the Council make-up reflects the racial diversity of the community, establishing meeting times that accommodate the needs of Council members, adding a local or regional workforce entity and a representative from a local employer, and charging the Council with collaborating with the Office of Early Childhood related to planning improvements to the state early care and education governance structure. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16r.

RATIONALE: Elevating the voices of parents, families, communities, and people of color in early care and education decision making advances the agency's goals to be more responsive in meeting the unique needs of children, families, and communities. By adding stipulations around the presence of parents on the councils, the demographic make-up, and operating processes of councils, OEC will work with councils to ensure that local decision-making is more equitable and transparent.

These important council changes also offer the opportunity for governance bodies to coordinate with other state agencies that impact the lives of the families they are serving. Councils will coordinate with a workforce development entity and a representative from a local employer to collaborate on how to best serve parents and families who need access to high-quality early care and education to pursue their education and employment goals. These amendments will enable communities to distribute ECE resources to their communities more equitably.

Over the next year, OEC will work with stakeholders to co-create a broader local governance plan that builds off these initial changes to continue refining ECE governance to ensure that bodies empower local communities, lift up family voice, and promote collaborative, equitable decision-making concerning allocation of resources.

2) Allow the Office of Early Childhood to allocate state funds for licensed family child care services, within available appropriations to equitably address the shortage of infant and toddler care. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16p, 10-509, and 8-210.

RATIONALE: Family Child Care (FCC) providers are a critical element of the early care and education system and their importance has been heightened during the pandemic as their small group sizes make it easier to follow public health guidelines and allow many parents to feel more comfortable sending



their children to this setting. Beyond the temporary COVID-19 implications, FCC providers also provide more flexible hours and offer culturally competent care, both of which are of critical importance to many families of color who are disproportionately likely to work non-traditional hours. They also provide an opportunity to rapidly address the lack of supply of high-quality infant and toddler care in the state.

Currently in Connecticut, FCC providers only have access to Care 4 Kids funding to provide child care. By expanding FCC providers' access to other state funding sources, OEC will create the opportunity to support this critical provider sector in the early care and education system, increase equity of access for families, and more flexibly adjust to the changing needs of families and communities. This is an initial step toward a more unified funding approach that is flexible across age groups, regions of the state, and provider settings to ease providers' administrative burden and be more responsive to the needs of children and families.

3) Allow the Office of Early Childhood to administer School Readiness funds through contracts to reduce burden on providers and agency staff, and align with how other state funding streams are administered. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16p.

RATIONALE: Administering School Readiness funds via contracts will align School Readiness to the payment processes and reporting and compliance requirements of other state funding streams, which will alleviate the administrative burden of managing multiple funding streams for both providers and OEC. This is initial step toward a more unified approach that is flexible across age groups, regions of the state, and child care settings to ease providers' administrative burden and be more responsive to the needs of children and families.

4) Fiscally stabilize state-funded child care providers by purchasing groups of spaces within available appropriations. (Effective July 1, 2021) Amend Sec. 10-16p.

RATIONALE: The current funding system pays providers per utilized slot, which results in provider revenues from state funding fluctuating as child attendance fluctuates, even though provider costs are largely fixed at the classroom level. This approach has become even more ineffectual during the COVID-19 crisis as public health guidelines require reduced classroom sizes, and demand for child care will be unpredictable for the foreseeable future.

OEC's shift to provide funding for groups of spaces for eligible children ensures that state funding is most supportive of provider fiscal stability by not penalizing providers for short-term fluctuations in utilization outside of their control. Increased provider stability will continue advancing OEC's goal of expanding access to high-quality early care and education for Connecticut's families. A version of this approach has been used in the emergency response to COVID and has been successful



5) Enable communities to best meet family needs by changing the School Readiness age eligibility to include children 6 weeks to up to 5 years of age, allowing them to choose to use state funds to serve infants and toddlers. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16p.

RATIONALE: 73% of Connecticut towns lack a sufficient number of child care spaces for infants and toddlers. Allowing School Readiness Councils to work with OEC to allocate funds for infant and toddler care in both licensed centers and family child care homes offers the opportunity to address this severe infant and toddler child care shortage and the flexibility to understand and respond to unique needs of families and communities.

This will be an initial step toward a more unified funding approach that is flexible across age groups, regions of the state, and child care settings to ease providers' administrative burden and be more responsive to the needs of children and families.

6) Add an explicit goal that emphasizes the importance of promoting socio-economic and racial and ethnic diversity among classrooms where children are served and among staff at providers who receive state funding. (Effective July 1 2021). Amend Sec. 10-16o.

RATIONALE: Creating a system that is equitable for all of Connecticut's children and families as well as every member of the early care and education workforce is a critical component of OEC's long-term vision for the ECE system. Establishing this specific goal around diversity will support the agency's efforts to make this vision a reality and use the means at its disposal to encourage providers to maintain socio-economic and racial and ethnic diversity among their staff and in the classrooms where children are served.

Section 2: Ensure that OEC has access to licensing information to monitor, evaluate and support licensed child care programs. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-500 (10). **RATIONALE:** This will ensure that OEC staff have sufficient licensing data about licensed child care programs in order deliver the appropriate supports to help programs maintain compliance.

Section 3: Prohibit an individual eighteen years of age or older and seeking employment in a group child care home or center from beginning work until that individual's FBI criminal background check is cleared (Effective October 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 19a-80(c). **RATIONALE:** This would bring Connecticut into compliance with federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) requirements regarding background checks for all licensed centers, group homes, and any license-exempt programs receiving CCDF funds.

Section 4: Change the age of a family child care home household member who must submit to a comprehensive background check from age 16 to 18. (Effective October 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 19a-87b(c). **RATIONALE:** This would align with Connecticut's raise the age policy. Since juvenile records are



currently sealed, information cannot be released to the OEC, and therefore, a background check has little value.

Section 5: Require licensed youth camp staff age 18 and older to submit to a background check, based on name and date of birth. (Effective October 1, 2021.) Amend Sec. 19a-42. RATIONALE: Background checks are an essential safeguard to protect the health and safety of children. This would be similar background check policy with licensed family child care homes, group child care homes, and child care centers.

Section 6: Provide the Commissioner the authority to waive fingerprints for individuals medically unavailable due to a variety of medical conditions. (Effective October 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-530(d). RATIONALE: Occasional cases exist in which it is medically impossible to obtain fingerprints from individuals with specific medical conditions. By allowing the Commissioner the authority to waive fingerprints for individuals with such medical challenges, the Commissioner will have the opportunity to review each situation, ensuring that proper medical documentation is given regarding such conditions that make it impossible to obtain a fingerprint. The language is modeled after language from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Section 7: Delete reference to “Nurturing Families Network” and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System; update the purpose of Connecticut’s home visiting system. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 17b-751b. RATIONALE: Rather than focusing on one particular model, known as Nurturing Families Network, the OEC is now approaching home visiting services holistically through several evidence-based models. The amended purpose of home visiting is updated to reflect current policy and practice.

Section 8: Delete reference to “Nurturing Families Network” and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System; delete references to (B) Family Empowerment Initiative; (D) Family School Connection, (E) support services for residents of a respite group home for girls; (F) volunteer services, and (I) sexual abuse prevention. Add (E) working with parents who are incarcerated, (F) promoting the work of doulas to help women at highest risk for poor pregnancy outcomes achieve healthy birth outcomes and (G) supporting homeless diversion for families with young children. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 17b-751d. RATIONALE: Rather than focusing on one particular model, known as Nurturing Families Network, the OEC is now approaching home visiting services holistically through several evidence-based models. The other OEC-funded programs in Sections (B), (D), (E) (F) and (I) no longer exist.

Section 9: Delete reference to “Nurturing Families Network” and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-509. RATIONALE: Rather than focusing on one particular model, known as Nurturing Families Network, the OEC is now approaching home visiting services holistically through several evidence-based models.



Section 10: Delete reference to “Nurturing Families Network” and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 17b – 261. Rather than focusing on one particular model, known as Nurturing Families Network, the OEC is now approaching home visiting services holistically through several evidence-based models.

Section 11: Delete reference to “Nurturing Families Network” and replace with Connecticut Home Visiting System. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. Sec. 17b-277a. Rather than focusing on one particular model, known as Nurturing Families Network, the OEC is now approaching home visiting services holistically through several evidence-based models.

Section 12: Permit the Commissioner of Education, upon request of the executive director, program director, or the superintendent of an approved Birth to Three program/employing school district, to allow any individual who holds an endorsement in the areas of 1) comprehensive special education #165 or #065 or #265, 2) partially sighted #055, 3) blind #059, 4) deaf and hard of hearing #057, 5) integrated early childhood and special education #113, to teach infants and toddlers beginning at birth in the CT Birth to Three System. Such permission shall be valid for the duration of the certificate and may be renewed by the Commissioner of Education upon request from the executive director, program director, or the superintendent of an approved Birth to Three program/employing school district. Amend Sec. 10-145d. (Effective July 1, 2021). Amend Sec. 10-145d. RATIONALE: The Birth to Three System is experiencing a severe shortage of teachers qualified to work with families of infants and toddlers with disabilities, in part due to an increase in referrals. Teachers working in Birth to Three are currently considered to be working under their certification only if they hold the #112 endorsement - Integrated Early Childhood/Special Education, Birth-Kindergarten. Consideration of other endorsements for teachers who have the appropriate skills to work in Birth to Three would help alleviate this shortage. In addition, Birth to Three has a mandatory comprehensive system of personnel development for all staff based on trainings and successful completion of exams that further supports the knowledge and skills necessary to use evidence-based practices in Birth to Three.

Section 13: Clarify that a person who may be a subject to a civil penalty for operating a youth camp without a license has the right to an administrative hearing in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 54 of the General Statutes. (Effective Upon Passage). Amend Sec. 19a-425. RATIONALE: There is no existing statutory language that provides the right to an administrative hearing for these parties. This change would align with providing the right to an administrative hearing for licensed family child care homes, group child care homes and child care centers.

Origin of Proposal New Proposal Resubmission



If this is a resubmission, please share:

- (1) What was the reason this proposal did not pass, or if applicable, was not included in the Administration's package?
- (2) Have there been negotiations/discussions during or after the previous legislative session to improve this proposal?
- (3) Who were the major stakeholders/advocates/legislators involved in the previous work on this legislation?
- (4) What was the last action taken during the past legislative session?

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PROPOSAL IMPACT

◇ **AGENCIES AFFECTED** *(please list for each affected agency)*

Agency Name: Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection

Agency Contact (name, title, phone): Cynthia Isales, Director of Legal Services, 860-685-8653 and Scott Devico, Legislative Liaison, 203-525-6959

Date Contacted: We shared proposed language in concerning background checks to Cynthia Isales and Scott Devico in Spring 2020. We responded to their inquiries. We have not discussed the most recent proposal to require youth camps to do background checks based solely on name and date of birth. Since the obligation to conduct background checks will fall on the camps and not the State of Connecticut, it will not impact DESPP.

Approve of Proposal YES NO **Talks Ongoing**

Summary of Affected Agency's Comments

OEC and DESPP had conversations and exchanged emails. OEC incorporated some DESPP comments into the legislative proposal.

Will there need to be further negotiation? YES **NO**

Agency Name: State Department of Education

Agency Contact (name, title, phone): Laura Stefon, Chief of Staff, Legislative Liaison, 860-713-6493

Date Contacted: Email was sent to Christopher Todd 10/22/2019 regarding scheduling a meeting to discuss the proposal to expand allowable endorsements for the Birth to Three system. Laura Stefon replied to OEC and said SDE would be happy to review any proposal that OEC would bring forward. Language was shared and Laura and Christopher reviewed the language and suggested changes. OEC incorporated changes into the draft language.

Approve of Proposal YES **NO** **Talks Ongoing**

Summary of Affected Agency's Comments

SDE suggested that the request for the 1) waiver come from the executive director, program director or the superintendent of an approved Birth to Three program/employing school



district, 2) that the teaching endorsement numbers be specified, and 3) that there be a duration of the waiver.
Will there need to be further negotiation? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO Unclear, there was no response.
Agency Name: Department of Developmental Services Agency Contact (name, title, phone): Krista Ostaszewski, Legislative Liaison, (860) 250-8454 Date Contacted: Discussion with Krista on 9/28/20 concerning proposal to require youth camps to adhere to spirit of the American Youth Camp Association requirements for background checks. DDS operates two camps, Harkness and Quinebaug, which are both licensed by the OEC. Pursuant to Sec. 17a-227a, DDS camp employees must submit to fingerprint checks. Approve of Proposal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> Talks Ongoing
Summary of Affected Agency's Comments DDS is fine with this proposal as long as the agency can go above and beyond and require fingerprints for its DSS camp employees.
Will there need to be further negotiation? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO Unclear, there was no response.

◇ **FISCAL IMPACT** (please include the proposal section that causes the fiscal impact and the anticipated impact)

Municipal (please include any municipal mandate that can be found within legislation) None
State Section 1 (3): Additional staff time will be needed to manage School Readiness contracts, which includes oversight and continuous improvement processes in collaboration with providers to achieve the best outcomes for children, families and communities. A combination of new staff and reassigning appropriate existing staff time will be used. Section 3: If the background check requirement for child care programs prior to starting employment is not enacted, the Office of Early Childhood would be out of compliance and subject to a corrective action plan and a partial loss of federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) dollars.
Federal
Additional notes on fiscal impact Click here to enter text.



◇ **POLICY and PROGRAMMATIC IMPACTS** *(Please specify the proposal section associated with the impact)*

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Insert fully drafted bill here

Section 1:

Section 10-16o:

Section 10-16o of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

Sec. 10-16o. Development of network of school readiness programs. The state shall encourage the development of a network of school readiness programs pursuant to sections 10-16p to 10-16r, inclusive, 10-16u and 17b-749a in order to:

- (1) Provide open access for children to quality programs that promote the health and safety of children and prepare them for formal schooling;
- (2) Provide opportunities for parents to choose among affordable and accredited programs;
- (3) Encourage coordination and cooperation among programs and prevent the duplication of services;
- (4) Recognize the specific service needs and unique resources available to particular municipalities and provide flexibility in the implementation of programs;
- (5) Prevent or minimize the potential for developmental delay in children prior to their reaching the age of five;
- (6) Enhance federally funded school readiness programs;
- (7) Strengthen the family through: (A) Encouragement of **[parental involvement]** [family engagement and partnership](#) in a child's development and education; and (B) enhancement of a family's capacity to meet the special needs of the children, including children with disabilities;
- (8) Reduce educational costs by decreasing the need for special education services for school age children and to avoid grade repetition;
- (9) Assure that children with disabilities are integrated into programs available to children who do not have disabilities;



(10) Facilitate the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of the children, families, and staff in school readiness programs; and

[(10)] (11) Improve the availability and quality of school readiness programs and their coordination with the services of child care providers.

Section 10-16p:

Section 10-16p of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

Sec. 10-16p. Definitions. Lead agency for school readiness; standards. Grant programs; eligibility. Unexpended funds. (a) As used in sections 10-16o to 10-16r, inclusive, 10-16u, 17b-749a and 17b-749c:

(1) "School readiness program" means a nonsectarian program that (A) meets the standards set by the Office of Early Childhood pursuant to subsection (b) of this section and the requirements of section 10-16q, and (B) provides a developmentally appropriate learning experience of not less than four hundred fifty hours and one hundred eighty days for eligible children, except as provided in subsection (d) of section 10-16q;

(2) "Eligible children" means children **[three and]** six weeks to four years of age and children five years of age who are not eligible to enroll in school pursuant to section 10-15c, or who are eligible to enroll in school and will attend a school readiness program pursuant to section 10-16t;

(3) "Priority school" means a school in which forty per cent or more of the lunches served are served to students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches pursuant to federal law and regulations, excluding such a school located in a priority school district pursuant to section 10-266p or in a former priority school district receiving a grant pursuant to subsection (c) of this section and, on and after July 1, 2001, excluding such a school in a transitional school district receiving a grant pursuant to section 10-16u;

(4) "Severe need school" means a school in a priority school district pursuant to section 10-266p or in a former priority school district in which forty per cent or more of the lunches served are served to students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches;

(5) "Accredited" means accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Association for Family Child Care, a Head Start on-site program review instrument or a successor instrument pursuant to federal regulations, or otherwise meeting such criteria as may be established by the commissioner, unless the context otherwise requires;

(6) "Year-round" means fifty weeks per year, except as provided in subsection (d) of section 10-16q;

(7) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Early Childhood;



(8) "Office" means the Office of Early Childhood;

(9) "Seeking accreditation" means a school readiness program seeking accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, [National Association for Family Child Care](#), or a Head Start on-site program review instrument or successor instrument pursuant to federal regulations, or attempting to meet criteria as may be established by the commissioner; and

(10) "Concentration in early childhood education" means a program of study in early childhood education, including, but not limited to, early childhood education, child study, child development or human growth and development.

(b) (1) The office shall be the lead agency for school readiness. For purposes of this section and section 10-16u, school readiness program providers eligible for funding from the office shall include local and regional boards of education, regional educational service centers, family resource centers and providers of child care centers, [group child care homes, and family child care homes](#) as defined in section 19a-77, Head Start programs, preschool programs and other programs that meet such standards established by the commissioner. The office shall establish standards for school readiness programs. The standards may include, but need not be limited to, guidelines for staff-child interactions, curriculum content, including preliteracy development, lesson plans, parent involvement, staff qualifications and training, transition to school and administration. The office shall develop age-appropriate developmental skills and goals for children attending such programs. The commissioner, in consultation with the president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, the Commissioners of Education and Social Services and other appropriate entities, shall develop a professional development program for the staff of school readiness programs.

(2) For purposes of this section:

(A) Prior to July 1, 2020, "staff qualifications" means there is in each classroom an individual who has at least the following: (i) A childhood development associate credential or an equivalent credential issued by an organization approved by the commissioner and twelve credits or more in early childhood education or child development, as determined by the commissioner or the president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, after consultation with the commissioner, from an institution of higher education (I) accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education or Office of Higher Education, and (II) regionally accredited; (ii) an associate degree with twelve credits or more in early childhood education or child development, as determined by the commissioner or the president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, after consultation with the commissioner, from such an institution; (iii) a four-year degree with twelve credits or more in early childhood education or child development, as determined by the commissioner or the president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, after consultation with the commissioner, from such an institution; (iv) certification pursuant to section 10-145b with an endorsement in early childhood education or special education; (v) an associate degree with a concentration in early childhood education from an institution of higher



education that is regionally accredited; or (vi) a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education from an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited;

(B) From July 1, 2020, until June 30, 2023, “staff qualifications” means that for each early childhood education program accepting state funds for infant, toddler and preschool spaces associated with such program's child care program or school readiness program, (i) at least fifty per cent of those individuals with the primary responsibility for a classroom of children (I) hold certification pursuant to section 10-145b with an endorsement in early childhood education or early childhood special education, (II) have been issued an early childhood teacher credential, pursuant to section 10-520b, (III) hold at least a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education from an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited, or (IV) satisfy the requirements of subdivision (3), (4) or (5) of this subsection, and (ii) such remaining individuals with the primary responsibility for a classroom of children hold an associate degree with a concentration in early childhood education from an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited; and

(C) On and after July 1, 2023, “staff qualifications” means that for each early childhood education program accepting state funds for infant, toddler and preschool spaces associated with such program's child care program or school readiness program, one hundred per cent of those individuals with the primary responsibility for a classroom of children (i) hold certification pursuant to section 10-145b with an endorsement in early childhood education or early childhood special education, (ii) have been issued an early childhood teacher credential, pursuant to subdivision (2) of section 10-520b, (iii) hold at least a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education from an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited, or (iv) satisfy the requirements of subdivision (3), (4) or (5) of this subsection.

(3) Any individual with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development or a bachelor's degree and twelve credits or more in early childhood education or child development, who, on or before June 30, 2015, is employed by an early childhood education program that accepts state funds for infant, toddler and preschool spaces associated with such program's child care program or school readiness program shall be considered to meet the staff qualifications required under subparagraphs (B) and (C) of subdivision (2) of this subsection. No such early childhood education program shall terminate any such individual from employment for purposes of meeting the staff qualification requirements set forth in subparagraph (B) or (C) of subdivision (2) of this subsection.

(4) Any individual with an associate degree or a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development or an associate degree or a bachelor's degree and twelve credits or more in early childhood education or child development from an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited, other than an associate degree or a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education, may submit documentation concerning such degree for review and assessment by the office as to whether such degree has a sufficient concentration in early childhood education so as to satisfy the requirements set forth in subparagraphs (B) and (C) of subdivision (2) of this subsection.



(5) Any individual with an associate degree with twelve credits or more in early childhood education or child development, as determined by the commissioner or the president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, after consultation with the commissioner, from an institution of higher education (A) accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education or Office of Higher Education, and (B) regionally accredited, who has been employed in the same early childhood education program that accepts state funds for infant, toddler and preschool spaces associated with such program's child care program or school readiness program since 1995 shall be considered to meet the staff qualifications required under subparagraphs (B) and (C) of subdivision (2) of this subsection until June 30, 2025. On and after July 1, 2025, such individual shall hold a childhood development associate credential or an equivalent credential, described in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (2) of this subsection, or otherwise meet the staff qualifications required under subparagraph (C) of subdivision (2) of this subsection. Any such individual who terminates his or her employment with such early childhood education program on or before June 30, 2025, and accepts a position at another early childhood education program accepting state funds for spaces associated with such program's child care program or school readiness program shall submit documentation of such individual's progress toward meeting the staff qualification requirements set forth in subparagraph (B) or (C) of subdivision (2) of this subsection in a manner determined by the office.

(c) The commissioner shall establish a grant program to provide [spaces in] [state financial assistance](#) to accredited school readiness programs located in priority school districts, as described in section 10-266p, or in former priority school districts for eligible children. [Under the program, the grant shall be provided, in accordance with this section, to the town in which such priority school district or former priority school district is located.] [The state, acting by and in the discretion of the Commissioner of Early Childhood, in consultation with a town or regional school readiness council, may enter into a contract with a municipality, local or regional board of education, regional educational service center, family resource center, provider of a child care center, group child care home, or family child care home as defined in section 19a-77, Head Start programs, preschool programs or other programs that meet such standards established by the commissioner, to provide such state financial assistance, within available appropriations.](#) Eligibility shall be determined for a three-year period based on an applicant's designation as a priority school district for the initial year of application, except that if a school district that receives a grant pursuant to this subsection is no longer designated as a priority school district at the end of such three-year period, such former priority school district shall continue to be eligible to receive a grant pursuant to this subsection. Grant awards shall be made annually contingent upon available funding and a satisfactory annual evaluation. The chief elected official of such town and the superintendent of schools for such priority school district or former priority school district shall submit a plan for the expenditure of grant funds and responses to the local request for proposal process to the commissioner. The commissioner shall review and approve such plans. The plan shall: (1) Be developed in consultation with the local or regional school readiness council established pursuant to section 10-16r; (2) be based on a needs and resource assessment; (3) provide for the issuance of requests for proposals for providers of accredited school readiness programs, provided, after the initial



requests for proposals, facilities that have been approved to operate a child care program financed through the Connecticut Health and Education Facilities Authority and have received a commitment for debt service from the Department of Social Services, pursuant to section 17b-749i, on or before June 30, 2014, and on or after July 1, 2014, from the office, are exempt from the requirement for issuance of annual requests for proposals; and (4) identify the need for funding pursuant to section 17b-749a in order to extend the hours and days of operation of school readiness programs in order to provide child care services for children attending such programs.

(d) (1) The commissioner shall establish a competitive grant program to provide **[spaces in]** [state financial assistance to](#) accredited school readiness programs or school readiness programs seeking accreditation located in (A) an area served by a priority school or a former priority school, (B) a town ranked one to fifty when all towns are ranked in ascending order according to town wealth, as defined in subdivision (26) of section 10-262f, whose school district is not a priority school district pursuant to section 10-266p, (C) a town formerly a town described in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision, as provided for in subdivision (2) of this subsection, or (D) a town designated as an alliance district, as defined in section 10-262u, whose school district is not a priority school district pursuant to section 10-266p. A town in which a priority school is located, a regional school readiness council, pursuant to subsection (c) of section 10-16r, for a region in which such a school is located or a town described in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision may apply for such a grant in an amount **[equal to]** [that does not exceed](#) the number of spaces in an accredited school readiness program or a school readiness program seeking accreditation multiplied by the per child cost set forth in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 10-16q. Eligibility shall be determined for a three-year period based on an applicant's designation as having a priority school or being a town described in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision for the initial year of application. [The state, acting by and in the discretion of the Commissioner of Early Childhood, in consultation with a town or regional school readiness council, may enter into a contract with a municipality, local or regional board of education, regional educational service center, family resource center, provider of a child care center, group child care home, or family child care home as defined in section 19a-77, Head Start programs, preschool programs or other programs that meet such standards established by the commissioner, to provide such state financial assistance, within available appropriations.](#) **[Grant awards shall be made annually contingent upon available funding and a satisfactory annual evaluation.]** The chief elected official of such town and the superintendent of schools of the school district or the regional school readiness council shall submit a plan, as described in subsection (c) of this section, for the expenditure of such grant funds to the commissioner. In awarding grants pursuant to this subsection, the commissioner shall give preference to applications submitted by regional school readiness councils and may, within available appropriations, provide a grant to such town or regional school readiness council that increases the number of spaces for eligible children who reside in an area or town described in subparagraphs (A) to (D), inclusive, of this subdivision, in an accredited school readiness program or a school readiness program seeking accreditation. **[A town or regional school readiness council awarded a grant pursuant to this subsection**



shall use the funds to purchase spaces for such children from providers of accredited school readiness programs or school readiness programs seeking accreditation.]

(2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (C) of this subdivision, commencing with the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005, if a town received a grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection and is no longer eligible to receive such a grant, the town may receive a phase-out grant for each of the three fiscal years following the fiscal year such town received its final grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(B) The amount of such phase-out grants shall be determined as follows: (i) For the first fiscal year following the fiscal year such town received its final grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, in an amount that does not exceed seventy-five per cent of the grant amount such town received for the town or school's final year of eligibility pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection; (ii) for the second fiscal year following the fiscal year such town received its final grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, in an amount that does not exceed fifty per cent of the grant amount such town received for the town's or school's final year of eligibility pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection; and (iii) for the third fiscal year following the fiscal year such town received its final grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, in an amount that does not exceed twenty-five per cent of the grant amount such town received for the town's or school's final year of eligibility pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(C) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, and each fiscal year thereafter, any town that received a grant pursuant to subparagraph (B) of subdivision (1) of this subsection for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, shall continue to receive a grant under this subsection even if the town no longer meets the criteria for such grant pursuant to subparagraph (B) of subdivision (1) of this subsection.

[(e) (1) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, and each fiscal year thereafter, priority school districts and former priority school districts shall receive grants based on the sum of the products obtained by (A) multiplying the district's number of contracted slots on March thirtieth of the fiscal year prior to the fiscal year in which the grant is to be paid, by the per child cost pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 10-16q, except that such per child cost shall be reduced for slots that are less than year-round, and (B) multiplying the number of additional or decreased slots the districts have requested for the fiscal year in which the grant is to be paid by the per child cost pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 10-16q, except such per child cost shall be reduced for slots that are less than year-round. If said sum exceeds the available appropriation, such number of requested additional slots shall be reduced, as determined by the commissioner, to stay within the available appropriation.]

(2) (A) If funds appropriated for the purposes of subsection (c) of this section are not expended, the commissioner may deposit such unexpended funds in the account established under section 10-16aa and use such unexpended funds in accordance with the provisions of section 10-16aa.



(B) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, and each fiscal year thereafter, if funds appropriated for the purposes of subsection (c) of this section are not expended, an amount up to one million dollars of such unexpended funds may be available for the provision of professional development for early childhood care and education program providers, and staff employed in such programs, provided such programs accept state funds for infant, toddler and preschool slots. Such unexpended funds may be available for use in accordance with the provisions of this subparagraph for the subsequent fiscal year. The commissioner may use such unexpended funds on and after July 1, 2015, to support early childhood education programs accepting state funds in satisfying the staff qualifications requirements of subparagraphs (B) and (C) of subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section. The commissioner shall use any such funds to provide assistance to individual staff members, giving priority to those staff members (i) attending an institution of higher education accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education or the Office of Higher Education, and approved by the Office of Early Childhood, and regionally accredited, at a maximum of ten thousand dollars per staff member per year for the cost of higher education courses leading to a bachelor's degree or, not later than December 31, 2015, an associate degree, as such degrees are described in said subparagraphs (B) and (C), or (ii) receiving noncredit competency-based training approved by the office, at a maximum of one thousand dollars per staff member per year, provided such staff members have applied for all available federal and state scholarships and grants, and such assistance does not exceed such staff members' financial need. Individual staff members shall apply for such unexpended funds in a manner determined by the commissioner. The commissioner shall determine how such unexpended funds shall be distributed.

(C) If funds appropriated for the purposes of subsection (c) of this section are not expended pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, deposited pursuant to subparagraph (A) of this subdivision, or used pursuant to subparagraph (B) of this subdivision, the commissioner may use such unexpended funds to support local school readiness programs. The commissioner may use such funds for purposes including, but not limited to, (i) assisting local school readiness programs in meeting and maintaining accreditation requirements, (ii) providing training in implementing the preschool assessment and curriculum frameworks, including training to enhance literacy teaching skills, (iii) developing a state-wide preschool curriculum, (iv) developing student assessments for students in grades kindergarten to two, inclusive, (v) developing and implementing best practices for parents in supporting preschool and kindergarten student learning, (vi) developing and implementing strategies for children to successfully transition to preschool and from preschool to kindergarten, including through parental engagement and whole-family supports that may be utilized through the two-generational initiative, established pursuant to section 17b-112l, or through other available resources, (vii) providing for professional development, including assisting in career ladder advancement, for school readiness staff, (viii) providing supplemental grants to other towns that are eligible for grants pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, and (ix) developing a plan to provide spaces in an accredited school readiness program or a school readiness program seeking accreditation to all eligible children who reside in an area or town described in subparagraphs (A) to (D), inclusive, of subdivision (1) of subsection (d) of this section.



(3) Notwithstanding subdivision (2) of this subsection, for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2015, to June 30, 2016, inclusive, the office may retain up to one hundred ninety-eight thousand two hundred dollars of the amount appropriated for purposes of this section for coordination, program evaluation and administration.

(f) Any school readiness program that receives funds pursuant to this section or section 10-16u shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion or disability. For purposes of this section, a nonsectarian program means any public or private school readiness program that is not violative of the Establishment Clause of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut or the Establishment Clause of the Constitution of the United States of America.

(g) Subject to the provisions of this subsection, no funds received by a town pursuant to subsection (c) or (d) of this section or section 10-16u shall be used to supplant federal, state or local funding received by such town for early childhood education, provided a town may use an amount determined in accordance with this subsection for coordination, program evaluation and administration. Such amount shall be at least five per cent of the total grant allocation, but not more than seventy-five thousand dollars and shall be determined by the commissioner based on the school readiness grant award allocated to the town pursuant to subsection (c) or (d) of this section or section 10-16u and the number of operating sites for coordination, program evaluation and administration. Such amount shall be increased by an amount equal to local funding provided for early childhood education coordination, program evaluation and administration, not to exceed twenty-five thousand dollars. Each town that receives a grant pursuant to subsection (c) or (d) of this section or section 10-16u shall designate a person, to be responsible for such coordination and administration and to act as a liaison between the town and the commissioner. Each school readiness program that receives funds pursuant to this section or section 10-16u shall provide information to the commissioner or the school readiness council, as requested, that is necessary for purposes of any school readiness program evaluation.

(h) Any town receiving a grant pursuant to this section may use such grant, with the approval of the commissioner, to prepare a facility or staff for operating a school readiness program and shall be adjusted based on the number of days of operation of a school readiness program if a shorter term of operation is approved by the commissioner.

(i) A town may use grant funds to purchase spaces for eligible children who reside in such town at an accredited school readiness program located in another town. A regional school readiness council may use grant funds to purchase spaces for eligible children who reside in the region covered by the council at an accredited school readiness program located outside such region.

(j) Children enrolled in school readiness programs funded pursuant to this section shall not be counted (1) as resident students for purposes of subdivision (22) of section 10-262f, or (2) in the determination of average daily membership pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of section 10-261.



(k) (1) Up to two per cent of the amount of the appropriation for this section may be allocated to the competitive grant program pursuant to subsection (d) of this section. The determination of the amount of such allocation shall be made on or before August first.

(2) Up to two per cent of the amount of the appropriation for this section may be used by the commissioner in a manner consistent with the provisions of section 10-509.

Section 10-16r:

Section 10-16r of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

Sec. 10-16r. Local school readiness councils; duties. Regional school readiness councils. (a) A town seeking to apply for a grant pursuant to subsection (c) of section 10-16p or section 10-16u shall convene a local school readiness council or shall establish a regional school readiness council pursuant to subsection (c) of this section. Any other town may convene such a council. The chief elected official of the town or, in the case of a regional school district, the chief elected officials of the towns in the school district and the superintendent of schools for the school district shall jointly appoint and convene such council. Each school readiness council shall be composed of: (1) The chief elected official, or the official's designee; (2) the superintendent of schools, or a management level staff person as the superintendent's designee; (3) parents; (4) representatives from local programs such as Head Start, [child care providers receiving state financial assistance pursuant to section 8-210](#), family resource centers, nonprofit and for-profit child care centers, group child care homes, prekindergarten and nursery schools, and family child care home providers; (5) a representative from a health care provider in the community; (6) the local homeless education liaison designated by the local or regional board of education for the school district, pursuant to Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 USC 11431 et seq., as amended from time to time; **[and]** (7) [a representative from a workforce or job training entity in the community;](#) (8) [a representative from a local business in the community;](#) **and** (9) other representatives from the community who provide services to children. The **[chief elected official shall designate]** [members of the school readiness council shall elect](#) the chairperson of the school readiness council. [Each school readiness council is required to document efforts to ensure that the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the council reflects that of its town or region. Parents or guardians of children eligible to attend school readiness programs shall constitute twenty-five percent \(25%\) of each school readiness council. Within available appropriations, such parent or guardian participants of school readiness councils may be compensated for time and travel related to council meetings, and activities related to training, leadership, and community engagement. School readiness council meetings shall be held at times that are convenient to accommodate council members including parents and guardians.](#)

(b) The local school readiness council shall: (1) Make recommendations to the chief elected official and the superintendent of schools on issues relating to school readiness, including any applications for



grants pursuant to sections 10-16p, 10-16u, 17b-749a and 17b-749c; (2) foster partnerships among providers of school readiness programs; (3) cooperate with the Office of Early Childhood in any evaluation of a school readiness program; (4) identify existing and prospective resources and services available to children and families; (5) facilitate the coordination of the delivery of services to children and families, including (A) referral procedures, and (B) before and after-school child care for children attending kindergarten programs; (6) exchange information with other councils, the community and organizations serving the needs of children and families; (7) make recommendations to school officials concerning transition from school readiness programs to kindergarten; **[and]** (8) encourage public participation; **and (9) collaborate with the Office of Early Childhood related to planning improvements to the state early care and education governance structure.**

(c) Two or more towns or school districts and appropriate representatives of groups or entities interested in early childhood education in a region may establish a regional school readiness council. If a priority school is located in at least one of such school districts, the regional school readiness council may apply for a grant pursuant to subsection (d) of section 10-16p. The regional school readiness council may perform the duties outlined in subdivisions (2) to (8), inclusive, of subsection (b) of this section.

Section 10-509:

Section 10-509 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

Sec. 10-509. Expenditure of certain funds for early care and education and child development programs. (a) As used in this subsection, “early care and education and childhood development programs” includes the child care subsidy program, established pursuant to section 17b-749, the school readiness program, as defined in section 10-16p, the supplemental quality enhancement grant program, established pursuant to section 17b-749c, the **[Nurturing Families Network]** [Connecticut Home Visiting System](#), established pursuant to section 17b-751b, [family child care homes and group child care homes as defined in section 19a-77](#), and the program for state financial assistance for neighborhood facilities, including child care centers, pursuant to section 8-210.

(b) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Commissioner of Early Childhood may expend in any year an amount not to exceed two per cent of the total amount appropriated to the office for early care and education and child development programs for the purpose of carrying out its responsibilities pursuant to section 10-500, including, but not limited to, piloting innovative and results-driven service delivery, program evaluation and improvement, funding and procurement models that are performance-driven and results-accountable, interagency coordination and collaboration and evaluative tools and infrastructure, provided if the total amount of such two per cent exceeds one million dollars, all funds in excess of one million dollars shall be used for service delivery. The commissioner may not expend any funds under this section for administrative



or other overhead costs of the Office of Early Childhood. The commissioner may develop policies and procedures to implement the provisions of this section.

(c) Not later than January first of each year, the office shall submit a report relating to how the commissioner has expended funds pursuant to subsection (b) of this section to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a. Such report shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) the results of any program evaluations conducted by the office, (2) an assessment of the relationship between the cost and the value of the service delivery outcomes achieved, and (3) any policies and procedures developed by the commissioner to implement the provisions of this section.

Section 8-210

Section 8-210 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

Sec. 8-210. State financial assistance for the planning, construction, renovation, site preparation and purchase of property for neighborhood facilities, including child care centers. Guidelines for programs at state-contracted child care centers. (a) The state, acting by and in the discretion of the Commissioner of Social Services or the Commissioner of Early Childhood, as appropriate, may enter into a contract with a municipality or a qualified private, nonprofit corporation for state financial assistance for the planning, construction, renovation, site preparation and purchase of improved or unimproved property as part of a capital development project for neighborhood facilities. Such facilities may include, but need not be limited to, child care centers, elderly centers, multipurpose human resource centers, emergency shelters for the homeless and shelters for victims of domestic violence. The financial assistance shall be in the form of state grants-in-aid equal to (1) all or any portion of the cost of such capital development project if the grantee is a qualified private nonprofit corporation, or (2) up to two-thirds of the cost of such capital development project if the grantee is a municipality, as determined by the Commissioner of Social Services or the Commissioner of Early Childhood, as appropriate.

(b) The state, acting by and in the discretion of the Commissioner of Early Childhood, may enter into a contract with a municipality, [a group child care home, or family child care home as defined in section 19a-77](#), a human resource development agency or a nonprofit corporation for state financial assistance in developing and operating child care centers for children disadvantaged by reasons of economic, social or environmental conditions, provided no such financial assistance shall be available for the operating costs of any such child care center unless it has been licensed by the Commissioner of Early Childhood pursuant to section 19a-80. Such financial assistance shall be available for a program of a municipality, [a group child care home, or family child care home as defined in section 19a-77](#), of a human resource development agency or of a nonprofit corporation which may provide for personnel, equipment, supplies, activities, program materials and renovation and remodeling of the physical



facilities of such child care centers. Such contract shall provide for state financial assistance, within available appropriations, in the form of a state grant-in-aid (1) for a portion of the cost of such program, as determined by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, if not federally assisted, (2) equal to one-half of the amount by which the net cost of such program, as approved by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, exceeds the federal grant-in-aid thereof, or (3) in an amount up to the per child cost as described in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 10-16q, for each child in such program that is three or four years of age and each child that is five years of age who is not eligible to enroll in school, pursuant to section 10-15c, while maintaining services to children under three years of age under this section. The Commissioner of Early Childhood may authorize child care centers, [group child care homes, or family child care homes](#) receiving financial assistance under this subsection to apply a program surplus to the next program year. The Commissioner of Early Childhood shall consult with directors of child care centers in establishing fees for the operation of such centers.

(c) The Office of Early Childhood, in consultation with representatives from child care centers, [group child care homes, or family child care homes, as appropriate](#), within available appropriations, shall develop guidelines for programs provided at state-contracted child care centers. The guidelines shall include standards for program quality and design and identify short and long-term outcomes for families participating in such programs. The Office of Early Childhood, within available appropriations, shall provide a copy of such guidelines to each state-contracted child care center, [group child care home, or family child care home as defined in section 19a-77](#). Each state-contracted child care center, [group child care home, or family child care home](#), shall use the guidelines to develop a program improvement plan for the next twelve-month period and shall submit the plan to the Office of Early Childhood. The plan shall include goals to be used for measuring such improvement. The Office of Early Childhood shall use the plan to monitor the progress of such center.

(d) The state, acting by and in the discretion of the Commissioner of Early Childhood, may enter into a contract with a municipality, [a group child care home, or family child care home as defined in section 19a-77](#), a human resource development agency or a nonprofit corporation for state financial assistance for a project of renovation of any child care center receiving assistance under this section, to make such center accessible to persons with physical disabilities, in the form of a state grant-in-aid equal to (1) the total net cost of the project, as approved by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, or (2) the total amount by which the net cost of the project, as approved by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, exceeds the federal grant-in-aid thereof.

(e) Any municipality, [group child care home, or family child care home as defined in section 19a-77](#), human resource development agency or nonprofit corporation that enters into a contract pursuant to this section for state financial assistance for a child care center shall have sole responsibility for the development of the budget of the program provided at such child care center, including, but not limited to, personnel costs, purchases of equipment, supplies, activities and program materials, within the resources provided by the state under such contract. Upon local determination of a change in the type of child care services required in the area, a municipality, [group child care home, or family child care](#)



[home as defined in section 19a-77](#), human resource development agency or nonprofit corporation may, within the limits of its annual budget and subject to the provisions of this subsection and sections 19a-77 to 19a-80, inclusive, and 19a-82 to 19a-87a, inclusive, change its child care service. An application to change the type of child care service provided shall be submitted to the Commissioner of Early Childhood. Not later than forty-five days after the Commissioner of Early Childhood receives the application, the Commissioner of Early Childhood shall advise the municipality, [group child care home, or family child care home as defined in section 19a-77](#), human resource development agency or nonprofit corporation of the Commissioner of Early Childhood's approval, denial or approval with modifications of the application. If the Commissioner of Early Childhood fails to act on the application not later than forty-five days after the application's submittal, the application shall be deemed approved.

(f) The Commissioner of Early Childhood may (1) with the approval of the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, authorize the expenditure of such funds for the purposes of this section as shall enable the Commissioner of Early Childhood to apply for, qualify for and provide the state's share of federally assisted child care services, and (2) expend an amount not to exceed two per cent of the amount appropriated for purposes of this section in a manner consistent with the provisions of section 10-509.

Section 2:

Section 10-500 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

Sec. 10-500. Office of Early Childhood. Commissioner. Responsibilities. Successor department. Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office. (a) There is established an Office of Early Childhood. The office shall be under the direction of the Commissioner of Early Childhood, whose appointment shall be made by the Governor. Such appointment shall be in accordance with the provisions of sections 4-5 to 4-8, inclusive. The commissioner shall be responsible for implementing the policies and directives of the office. The commissioner shall have the authority to designate any employee as his or her agent to exercise all or part of the authority, powers and duties of the commissioner in his or her absence. Said office shall be within the Department of Education for administrative purposes only.

(b) The office shall be responsible for:

(1) Delivering services to young children and their families to ensure optimal health, safety and learning for each young child, including, but not limited to, coordinating agency efforts and data sharing in the two-generational initiative established pursuant to section 17b-112l;

(2) Developing and implementing the early childhood information system, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-501;

(3) Developing and reporting on the early childhood accountability plan, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-503;



- (4) Implementing a communications strategy for outreach to families, service providers and policymakers;
- (5) Beginning a state-wide longitudinal evaluation of the school readiness program examining the educational progress of children from prekindergarten programs to grade four, inclusive;
- (6) Developing, coordinating and supporting public and private partnerships to aid early childhood initiatives;
- (7) Developing a state-wide developmentally appropriate kindergarten entrance inventory that measures a child's level of preparedness for kindergarten, but shall not be used as a measurement tool for program accountability;
- (8) Creating a unified set of reporting requirements for the purpose of collecting the data elements necessary to perform quality assessments and longitudinal analysis;
- (9) Comparing and analyzing data collected pursuant to reporting requirements created under subdivision (8) of this subsection with the data collected in the state-wide public school information system, pursuant to section 10-10a, for population-level analysis of children and families;
- (10) Continually monitoring and evaluating all early care and education and child development programs and services, focusing on program outcomes in satisfying the health, safety, developmental and educational needs of all children [,while retaining distinct separation between quality improvement services and licensing services for child care centers, group child care homes and family child care homes];
- (11) Coordinating home visitation services across programs for young children;
- (12) Providing information and technical assistance to persons seeking early care and education and child development programs and services;
- (13) Assisting state agencies and municipalities in obtaining available federal funding for early care and education and child development programs and services;
- (14) Providing technical assistance to providers of early care and education programs and services to obtain licensing and improve program quality;
- (15) Establishing a quality rating and improvement system developed by the office that covers home-based, center-based and school-based early child care and learning;
- (16) Maintaining an accreditation facilitation initiative to assist early childhood care and education program and service providers in achieving national standards and program improvement;
- (17) Consulting with the Early Childhood Cabinet, established pursuant to section 10-16z, and the Head Start advisory committee, established pursuant to section 10-16n;
- (18) Ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive state-wide system of professional development for providers and staff of early care and education and child development programs and services;



- (19) Providing families with opportunities for choice in services including quality child care and community-based family-centered services;
 - (20) Integrating early childhood care and education and special education services;
 - (21) Promoting universal access to early childhood care and education;
 - (22) Ensuring nonduplication of monitoring and evaluation;
 - (23) Performing any other activities that will assist in the provision of early care and education and child development programs and services;
 - (24) Developing early learning and development standards to be used by early care and education providers;
 - (25) Developing and implementing a performance-based evaluation system to evaluate licensed child care centers, in accordance with the provisions of section 17b-749f; and
 - (26) Promoting the delivery of services to infants and toddlers to ensure optimal health, safety and learning of children from birth to three years of age.
- (c) The Office of Early Childhood may enter into memoranda of agreement with and accept donations from nonprofit and philanthropic organizations to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(d) The Office of Early Childhood shall constitute a successor department, in accordance with the provisions of sections 4-38d, 4-38e and 4-39, to (1) the Department of Education with respect to sections 8-210, 10-16n, 10-16p to 10-16r, inclusive, 10-16u, 10-16w, 10-16aa, 17b-749a, 17b-749c and 17b-749g to 17b-749i, inclusive; (2) the Department of Social Services (A) with respect to sections 17b-12, 17b-705a, 17b-730, 17b-733, 17b-738, 17b-749, 17b-749d to 17b-749f, inclusive, 17b-749j, 17b-749k, 17b-750 to 17b-751a, inclusive, and 17b-751d, and (B) for the purpose of administering the child care development block grant pursuant to the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990; (3) the Department of Public Health (A) with respect to sections 10a-194c, 12-634, 17a-28, 17a-101 and 19a-80f, (B) for the purpose of regulating child care services pursuant to sections 19a-77, 19a-79, 19a-80, 19a-82 and 19a-84 to 19a-87e, inclusive, (C) for the purpose of the conduct of regulation of youth camps, pursuant to sections 19a-420 to 19a-434, inclusive, and (D) for the purpose of administering the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program authorized under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, P.L. 111-148; and (4) the Department of Developmental Services with respect to sections 17a-248, 17a-248b to 17a-248h, inclusive, 38a-490a and 38a-516a.

(e) The Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office shall be based in the Office of Early Childhood.

Section 3. Sec. 19a-80

Subsection (c) of section 19a-80 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2021):

(c) The commissioner [,within available appropriations,] shall require [each prospective employee of] any person who is eighteen years of age or older and a prospective employee of a child care center or group child



care home [in] for a position [requiring] that requires the provision of care to a child or involves unsupervised access to any child in such child care center or group child care home, to submit to comprehensive background checks, including state and national criminal history records checks. The criminal history records checks required pursuant to this subsection shall be conducted in accordance with section 29-17a. The commissioner shall also request a check of the state child abuse registry established pursuant to section 17a-101k. [The Department of Social Services may agree to transfer funds appropriated for criminal history records checks to the Office of Early Childhood.] The Commissioner of Early Childhood shall notify each licensee of the provisions of this subsection. No such prospective employee shall [have unsupervised access to children in the child care center or group child care home until such comprehensive background check is completed and the Commissioner of Early Childhood permits such prospective employee to work in such child care center or group child care home] begin working in such child care center or group child care home until the provisions of 45 CFR 98.43(d)(4), as amended from time to time, have been satisfied.

Section 4. Sec. 19a-87b

Subsection (c) of section 19a-87b of the 2020 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2021):

(c) The commissioner [,within available appropriations,] shall require each initial applicant or prospective employee of a family child care home in a position requiring the provision of care to a child, including an assistant or substitute staff member and each household member who is [sixteen] eighteen years of age or older, to submit to comprehensive background checks, including state and national criminal history records checks. The criminal history records checks required pursuant to this subsection shall be conducted in accordance with section 29-17a. The commissioner shall also request a check of the state child abuse registry established pursuant to section 17a-101k. The commissioner shall notify each licensee of the provisions of this subsection. For purposes of this subsection, "household member" means any person, other than the person who is licensed to conduct, operate or maintain a family child care home, who resides in the family child care home, such as the licensee's spouse or children, tenants and any other occupant.

Section 5. Sec. 19a-421

Section 19a-421 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2021):

Sec. 19a-421. (Formerly Sec. 19-540). License required. Qualifications. Duration of validity. Fees. Background Checks. No person shall establish, conduct or maintain a youth camp without a license issued by the office. Applications for such license shall be made in writing at least thirty days prior to the opening of the youth camp on forms provided and in accordance with procedures established by the commissioner and shall be accompanied by a fee of eight hundred fifteen dollars or, if the applicant is a nonprofit, nonstock corporation or association, a fee of three hundred fifteen dollars or, if the applicant is a day camp affiliated with a nonprofit organization, for no more than five days duration and for which labor and materials are donated, no



fee. All such licenses shall be valid for a period of one year from the date of issuance unless surrendered for cancellation or suspended or revoked by the commissioner for violation of this chapter or any regulations adopted under section 19a-428 and shall be renewable upon payment of an eight-hundred-fifteen-dollar license fee or, if the licensee is a nonprofit, nonstock corporation or association, a three-hundred-fifteen-dollar license fee or, if the applicant is a day camp affiliated with a nonprofit organization, for no more than five days duration and for which labor and materials are donated, no fee. Each youth camp licensed pursuant to this section shall require that each prospective employee age 18 or older in a position requiring the provision of care to a child, or involving unsupervised access to children, shall submit to a background check. Such background check shall include 1) a national criminal background check; 2) a check of the Connecticut Sex Offender Registry maintained by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection pursuant to sections 54-250 through 54-261; 3) a check of the National Sex Offender Registry Public Website maintained by the United State Department of Justice; and 3) a check of the child abuse and neglect registry maintained by the Department of Children and Families pursuant to section 17a-101k. Each youth camp licensed pursuant to this section must maintain all records and documentation associated with such background checks on site at the youth camp and provide access to such records and documentation to staff of the Office of Early Childhood upon request.

Section 6: Sec. 10-530

Sec. 4. Section 10-530 of the 2020 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2021):

(d) Any person required to submit to comprehensive background checks pursuant to subsection (c) of section 19a-80, as amended by this act, subsection (c) of section 19a-87b, as amended by this act, subsection (a) of section 17b-749k and subsection (b) of section 19a-421, may make a request, in writing, to the Commissioner of Early Childhood for a waiver of the requirement to submit fingerprints. Such written waiver 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 granting a waiver to a person under this subsection, the Office of Early Childhood shall conduct a state criminal history records check of such person based on the name and date of birth of such person that is included in the written waiver request.

Section 7. Sec. 17b-751b.

Section 17b-751b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

[Nurturing Families Network] Connecticut Home Visiting System. (a) The Commissioner of Early Childhood shall establish the structure for a state-wide **[Nurturing Families Network]** Connecticut Home Visiting System, which demonstrates the benefits of preventive services by significantly reducing the abuse and neglect of



infants [and young children](#) and by enhancing parent-child relationships through [\[hospital-based\] community-based](#) assessment with home outreach follow-up on infants [and young children](#) and their families within families identified as high risk.

(b) The commissioner shall: (1) [\[Develop the comprehensive risk assessment to be used by the Nurturing Families Network's providers \(2\) develop the training program, standards, and protocols for the pilot programs\]](#) [Ensure all home visiting programs are one or more of the evidence-based home visiting models that meet federal Health and Human Services criteria for evidence of effectiveness; \(2\) provide oversight to home visiting programs to insure model fidelity;](#) and (3) develop, issue and evaluate requests for proposals to procure the services required by this section. In evaluating the proposals, the commissioner shall take into consideration the most effective and consistent service delivery system allowing for the continuation of current public and private programs.

(c) The commissioner shall establish a data system to enable the programs to document the following information in a standard manner: (1) The level of screening and assessment; (2) profiles of risk and family demographics; (3) the incidence of child abuse and neglect; (4) rates of child development; and (5) any other information the commissioner deems appropriate.

(d) The commissioner shall report to the General Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, on the establishment, implementation and progress of the [\[Nurturing Families Network\] Connecticut Home Visiting System](#), on July first of each year [thereafter](#).

(e) The commissioner may expend an amount not to exceed two per cent of the amount appropriated for purposes of this section in a manner consistent with the provisions of section 10-509, [as amended by this act](#).

Section 8. Sec. 17b-751d.

Section 17b-751d of the general statutes is repealed and the 137 following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

The Office of Early Childhood shall be the lead state agency for community-based, prevention-focused programs and activities designed to strengthen and support families to prevent child abuse and neglect. The responsibilities of the office shall include, but not be limited to, collaborating with state agencies, hospitals, clinics, schools and community service organizations, to: (1) Initiate programs to support families at risk for child abuse or neglect; (2) assist organizations to recognize child abuse and neglect; (3) encourage community safety; (4) increase broad-based efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect; (5) create a network of agencies to advance child abuse and neglect prevention; and (6) increase public awareness of child abuse and neglect issues. The office, subject to available state, federal and private funding, shall be responsible for implementing and maintaining programs and services, including, but not limited to: (A) [\[The Nurturing Families Network\] Connecticut Home Visiting System](#), established pursuant to subsection (a) of section 17b-751b; (B) [\[Family Empowerment Initiative programs; \(C\)\]](#) Help Me Grow; [\[\(D\) Family School Connection; \(E\) support services for residents of a respite group home for girls; \(F\) volunteer services;-\(G\)\]](#) [\[C\]](#) family development training; [\[\(H\)\] \(D\)](#)



shaken baby syndrome prevention[; and (I) child sexual abuse prevention.]; (E) [working with parents who are incarcerated](#), (F) [promoting the work of doulas to help women at highest risk for poor pregnancy outcomes achieve healthy birth outcomes](#) and (G) [supporting homeless diversion for families with young children](#).

Section 9: Sec. 10-509

Subsection (a) of section 10-509 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

- (a) As used in this subsection, "early care and education and childhood development programs" includes the child care subsidy program, established pursuant to section 17b-749, the school readiness program, as defined in section 10-16p, the supplemental quality enhancement grant program, established pursuant to section 17b-749c, the [\[Nurturing Families Network\] Connecticut Home Visiting System](#), established pursuant to section 17b-751b, [as amended by this act](#), and the program for state financial assistance for neighborhood facilities, including child care centers, pursuant to section 8-210.

Section 10: Sec. 17b-261

Sec. 7. Subsection (a) of section 17b-261 of the 2020 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

(a) Medical assistance shall be provided for any otherwise eligible person whose income, including any available support from legally liable relatives and the income of the person's spouse or dependent child, is not more than one hundred forty-three per cent, pending approval of a federal waiver applied for pursuant to subsection (e) of this section, of the benefit amount paid to a person with no income under the temporary family assistance program in the appropriate region of residence and if such person is an institutionalized individual as defined in Section 1917 of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396p(h)(3), and has not made an assignment or transfer or other disposition of property for less than fair market value for the purpose of establishing eligibility for benefits or assistance under this section. Any such disposition shall be treated in accordance with Section 1917(c) of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396p(c). Any disposition of property made on behalf of an applicant or recipient or the spouse of an applicant or recipient by a guardian, conservator, person authorized to make such disposition pursuant to a power of attorney or other person so authorized by law shall be attributed to such applicant, recipient or spouse. A disposition of property ordered by a court shall be evaluated in accordance with the standards applied to any other such disposition for the purpose of determining eligibility. The commissioner shall establish the standards for eligibility for medical assistance at one hundred forty-three per cent of the benefit amount paid to a household of equal size with no income under the temporary family assistance program in the appropriate region of residence. In determining eligibility, the commissioner shall not consider as income Aid and Attendance pension benefits granted to a veteran, as defined in section 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such veteran. Except as provided in section 17b-277 and section 17b-292, the medical assistance program shall provide coverage to persons under the age



of nineteen with household income up to one hundred ninety-six per cent of the federal poverty level without an asset limit and to persons under the age of nineteen, who qualify for coverage under Section 1931 of the Social Security Act, with household income not exceeding one hundred ninety-six per cent of the federal poverty level without an asset limit, and their parents and needy caretaker relatives, who qualify for coverage under Section 1931 of the Social Security Act, with household income not exceeding one hundred fifty-five per cent of the federal poverty level without an asset limit. Such levels shall be based on the regional differences in such benefit amount, if applicable, unless such levels based on regional differences are not in conformance with federal law. Any income in excess of the applicable amounts shall be applied as may be required by said federal law, and assistance shall be granted for the balance of the cost of authorized medical assistance. The Commissioner of Social Services shall provide applicants for assistance under this section, at the time of application, with a written statement advising them of (1) the effect of an assignment or transfer or other disposition of property on eligibility for benefits or assistance, (2) the effect that having income that exceeds the limits prescribed in this subsection will have with respect to program eligibility, and (3) the availability of, and eligibility for, services provided by the [\[Nurturing Families Network\] Connecticut Home Visiting System](#), established pursuant to section 17b-751b, as amended by this act. For coverage dates on or after January 1, 2014, the department shall use the modified adjusted gross income financial eligibility rules set forth in Section 1902(e)(14) of the Social Security Act and the implementing regulations to determine eligibility for HUSKY A, HUSKY B and HUSKY D applicants, as defined in section 17b-290. Persons who are determined ineligible for assistance pursuant to this section shall be provided a written statement notifying such persons of their ineligibility and advising such persons of their potential eligibility for one of the other insurance affordability programs as defined in 42 CFR 435.4. 236.

Section 11: Sec. 17b-277a

Section 17b-277a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021):

The Commissioners of Public Health, Social Services and Mental Health and Addiction Services shall jointly establish a program to inform applicants to the Healthy Start program about the availability of, and eligibility for, services provided by the [\[Nurturing Families Network\] Connecticut Home Visiting System](#), established pursuant to 243 section 17b-751b, as amended by this act.

Section 12: NEW

[Sec. 9. \(NEW\) \(Effective July 1, 2021\) Upon request of the director of an early intervention service program participating in the birth-to-three program, established pursuant to section 17a-248b of the general statutes, the Commissioner of Education may permit any person who holds an endorsement in the areas of comprehensive special education, integrated early childhood and special education, partially sighted, blind, and hard of hearing, to teach within the birth-to-three program. Such permission shall be valid during the period of such person's certificate, permit or authorization, and may be extended by the commissioner, upon](#)



[request of the birth-to-three service provider, upon renewal of such person's certificate, permit or authorization by the commissioner.](#)

Section 13. Sec. 19a-425

Section 19a-425 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective from passage):

(a) Any person [or officer of an association, organization or corporation](#) who establishes, conducts or maintains a youth camp without a license as required by this chapter for a first offense shall be subject to a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars, and for a second or subsequent offense shall be subject to a civil penalty of not more than one thousand five hundred dollars, and each day during which a youth camp is conducted or maintained without a license, after notification to such person by the commissioner, shall constitute a separate offense. The commissioner may apply to the superior court for the judicial district of Hartford, or for the judicial district where the defendant named in such application resides, for an injunction to restrain the operation or maintenance of a youth camp by any person other than a licensed operator. The application for such injunction or the issuance of the same shall be in addition to and shall not relieve any such person from the imposition of a civil penalty under this section. In connection with any such application for an injunction, it shall not be necessary to prove that an adequate remedy at law does not exist.

[\(b\) If the Commissioner of Early Childhood has reason to believe that a violation has occurred for which a civil penalty is authorized by subsection \(a\) of this section, the commissioner may send to such person or officer by certified mail, return receipt requested or personally serve upon such person or officer, a notice that shall include: \(1\) A reference to the section or sections of the general statutes or regulations involved; \(2\) a short and plain statement of the matters asserted or charged; \(3\) a statement of the maximum civil penalty that may be imposed for such violation; and \(4\) a statement of the party's right to request a hearing. Such person or officer shall submit any request for a hearing in writing to the commissioner not later than thirty days after the notice is mailed or served.](#)

[\(c\) If such person or officer so requests, the commissioner shall cause a hearing to be held. The hearing shall be held in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54. If such person or officer fails to request a hearing or fails to appear at the hearing or if, after the hearing, the commissioner finds that the person or officer has committed such violation, the commissioner may, in his or her discretion, order that a civil penalty be imposed that is not greater than the penalty stated in the notice. The commissioner shall send a copy of any order issued pursuant to this subsection by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the person or officer named in such order.](#)