



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Jamie Bellenoit, LMFT, Ph.D., Chief Administrator
Community Child Guidance Clinic School

FROM: Dori Papa, Ed.D., Education Consultant *DP*
Bureau of Special Education

DATE: June 15, 2021

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION REPORT
Approval Review for a Private Special Education Program

Please note: This Approved Private Special Education Program approval review was conducted remotely due to the current public health and safety requirements resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. All required activities and components, as defined in the *Principles, Procedures and Standards for the Approval of Private Special Education Programs*, were conducted remotely and in accordance with the approval process.

On May 6, 2021, an evaluation team conducted a virtual site visit review for re-approval of Community Child Guidance Clinic School special education program. The team consisted of:

- Dori Papa, Ed.D., Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Kimberly Davis, Director of Student Services, East Lyme Public Schools; and
- Mark Hedrick, Senior Education Director, Oak Hill Schools.

During previous virtual site visit on May 4, 2021, Dr. Papa reviewed the education files of students, as well as personnel files. In addition, Dr. Papa reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by your staff.

At the exit conference on May 6, 2021, the evaluation team shared its impressions and preliminary findings. The following areas of the special education program have been reviewed:

- Governance;
- Administration;
- Fiscal management;
- Admissions;
- Individual student records;
- Program requirements;
- Evaluation of student progress and reporting responsibilities;
- Student management techniques;
- Qualifications and requirements for instructional, administrative, and support personnel;
- Health and safety; and
- Termination of enrollment.

1. Commendations:

- The program’s education director exhibits an outstanding level of enthusiasm, care, and dedication in his leadership role as evidenced in his attentive interactions with staff and students. Staff interviewed reported that administration is very involved and “always visible in classrooms and hallways.”
- Staff are characterized as dedicated, encouraging, and positive in their interactions with students.
- Staff interviewed described the program as being “a tight-knit community” with an overall culture of caring for each other and invested in the well-being of students.
- Administration solicits input from staff for professional development and training topics of interest and ensures that wellness and self-care activities are available for all staff members.
- Interview respondents reported that there is strong collaboration between teachers and related service providers during classroom service delivery ensuring that each student’s social-emotional needs are met.
- The overall climate throughout the program is cheerful, welcoming, positive and reinforcing. A positive culture and climate has been established and is evidenced by mutually respectful relationships among students and between staff and students.
- The program provides opportunities for families to engage in holiday celebrations and other activities, including fall open house, spring ice cream social, and end-of-year graduation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the program sent a food basket home to each family for the holidays.
- The program has a strong clinical component with a team comprised of licensed mental health professionals, including licensed clinical social workers, licensed master social workers, and a doctor of psychology. The clinical team is readily available to provide students with ongoing Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency (ARC) therapy.
- The observation team described classrooms as spacious, well-lit, colorful, and text rich with many visuals displayed on the walls, including student work products.
- Classroom observations evidenced that staff members provide students with consistent and clear expectations, positive praise, and reinforcement. Social-emotional goals were addressed very effectively.
- The program has invested in technology that supports teachers in their instruction and students in their learning. All classrooms are equipped with interactive Smart Boards, and students benefit from individual Chrome Books.

2. **Standard Deficiencies:**

The following standard deficiencies must be rectified:

Standard F: Program Requirements

The local school district is responsible for the development and appropriateness of a student's individualized education program (IEP) and any changes made in that IEP. Each private facility shall request an IEP from the placing local education agency (LEA) prior to enrolling the student. The IEP shall serve as the basis for each student's instruction. The IEP presented by the LEA serves as the basis for admission and should identify the current performance levels of the student, the appropriate specialized instruction, and required related services. Each private facility should participate in the planning and placement team (PPT) meeting, which discusses and determines placement in the facility prior to enrollment.

Issue: In four (4) of five (5) IEPs reviewed were not complete or accurate. In three (3) IEPs, related services indicated on the IEP were not separated/broken out to specify if the delivery of service is provided on a 1:1, small group basis. In one (1) IEP, the setting in which academic and behavioral instruction and a related service was not specified.

Corrective Action: Submit to the BSE copies of the next three (3) IEPs developed by the LEA's PPT for students enrolled. Ensure the IEPs demonstrate careful review for accuracy and completeness, and if needed, illustrate the implementation of written notification to the district to request necessary changes.

Standard H: Qualifications and Requirements for Instructional, Administrative, and Support Personnel

The private facility shall maintain a permanent individual personnel file for each employee and shall ensure said file is held confidential. The private facility shall require that prior work references be on record for all applicants and that the applicant submit to a records check of the Department of Children and Families Child Abuse and Neglect Registry before hiring staff who will work directly with students. The private facility shall obtain the information listed on the *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form from ALL current or former employer(s) of the applicant if such employer was a local or regional board of education, an approved private special education program, a governing council of a state or local charter school, an interdistrict magnet school operator, or if the employment caused the applicant to have contact with children. In addition, state and national criminal history records check (fingerprinting) of staff who work directly with students, shall be submitted within 30 days of hire and on file within 60 days from the date of employment. Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-221d.

Issue: In five (5) of five (5) personnel files reviewed, there was no evidence that a State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification form was completed for five (5) employees hired after July 1, 2016, in accordance with Public Act 16-67.

Corrective Action: Develop and implement a process for maintaining the necessary documentation within the staff file, which includes the verification that a State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification form was completed for employees hired on or after July 1, 2016, in accordance with PA 16-67. On or before June 30, 2021, submit to the BSE a checklist to be used, which includes all required/recommended items, to ensure appropriate documentation and verification within each personnel file and consistency across personnel files.

Standard J: Health and Safety

A private facility shall conduct monthly emergency drills that shall include one crisis response drill other than a fire drill once every third drill.

Issue: In reviewing emergency drill records, fire drills were documented to occur monthly but there was no evidence that every third drill was a crisis drill.

Corrective Action: On or before June 30, 2021, submit to the BSE attestation that the program will maintain emergency drill documentation evidencing that every third drill will be a crisis drill.

3. Recommendations:

It is recommended that your program consider taking the following action:

- Develop a schedule to include time for the interdisciplinary team to meet in preparation for PPT meetings.
- Consider purchasing suspended equipment as an addition to the occupational therapy service area to meet the sensory regulation needs of students.
- Move forth with the plan to develop a “restorative justice” classroom to empower students to resolve conflicts on their own and in small groups.
- Maintain a list of professional development activities offered in an administrative file, as well as in individual personnel files.
- Continue with the process of developing a more comprehensive curriculum with grade-level expectations aligned with the Connecticut Core Standards. Students will benefit structured fall, winter, and spring curriculum scope and sequence upon re-integration into their public school.
- Although the program utilizes the Wilson Reading System, consider exploring and planning to expand and enhance the program’s literacy infrastructure.

Jamie Bellenoit, LMFT, Ph.D., Chief Administrator
Preliminary Evaluation Report – Community Child Guidance Clinic School
Approval Review for a Private Special Education Program
June 15, 2021

Within 15 working days from the date of this preliminary evaluation report, please indicate in writing to the BSE whether your program agrees with the report and accepts the delineated corrective action plan. Upon receipt of your written agreement and acceptance of the entire report, a recommendation for program approval through June 30, 2026, will be submitted to the Acting Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to Community Child Guidance Clinic School:

Approved Ages to Serve:	3.5–15 years old (Grades PK–8)
Approved Student Capacity:	61 students
Approval Expiration Date:	June 30, 2026

cc: Mark Dougherty, Education Director