
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6359

AN ACT CONCERNING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM.

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), headed by an executive director who serves at the pleasure of the governor. The office assumes the responsibility of administering early childhood programs that are currently run by the State Department of Education (SDE), the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), and the Department of Public Health (DPH). For some programs, OEC or its executive director assumes a lead agency role, entirely replacing the existing administering agency; for others, the existing agency maintains a consultative role. For example, for school readiness programming OEC assumes a lead agency role, with SDE and DSS acting as consultants for various aspects.

The substance and content of these programs generally remain the same after transfer to OEC. The transfer process occurs in two phases. In the first phase, OEC is responsible for the following major programs as of July 1, 2013:

1. school readiness, which is currently run by SDE;
2. the family resource center program, currently administered by SDE;
3. child day care services management, evaluation, and professional development, presently the responsibility of DSS;
4. the Children's Trust Fund, currently a division of DSS; and
5. Connecticut Charts-a-Course, currently run by DSS.

In the second phase, OEC is responsible for the following major programs as of July 1, 2014:

1. state- and federally-funded child day care subsidies, currently administered by DSS;
2. child day care licensing and investigation of abuse claims, which DPH currently performs; and
3. the Birth-to-Three System, which DDS currently oversees.

The bill also reassigns various funds, grants, and loans to OEC oversight. Additionally, it changes the organization and membership of certain cabinets and councils, and it eliminates the Child Day Care Council.

The bill makes many minor, conforming, and technical changes; it also deletes several obsolete deadlines.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various; see below.

§§ 1-2 — OFFICE ORGANIZATION, LEADERSHIP, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The bill creates OEC, to be housed in SDE for administrative purposes only. An executive director, appointed by the governor as a department head, implements the policies and directives of the office. OEC responsibilities include:

1. delivering services to children;
2. administering the coordinated system of early care and education and child development;
3. developing and implementing an early childhood information system;
4. developing and reporting on an early childhood accountability plan;
5. implementing a communications strategy for outreach to

families, service providers, and policymakers;

6. by January 1, 2015, beginning a statewide longitudinal evaluation of the school readiness program to examine children's educational progress from preschool through grade four;
7. developing, coordinating, and supporting public and private partnerships to aid early childhood initiatives; and
8. developing a plan for changing the kindergarten entrance age requirement from January 1 to October 1 of the school year, and creating spaces in school readiness programs for children who are displaced by the change.

The bill designates OEC as a successor department to SDE, DSS, DDS, and DPH for administration of certain programs, funds, and cabinets detailed in subsequent sections.

The bill also requires local and regional school boards, school readiness programs receiving public funding, and licensed child day care centers to enter all children and staff into the early childhood information system.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

§§ 3-4 — COORDINATED SYSTEM AND PLANNING DIRECTOR

The bill requires OEC to administer the coordinated system of early care and education and child development in accordance with the planning director's plan. Appointed by the governor in 2011, the planning director has created a plan that consolidates programs and services from several agencies to create this coordinated system. By law, the coordinated system consists of comprehensive and aligned policies, responsibilities, practices, and services for young children and their families, including prenatal care and care for children from birth to age eight to ensure optimal health, safety, and learning for each child.

The bill shifts to OEC the responsibility to perform 25 tasks that the system must accomplish by law (see BACKGROUND). One such task requires OEC to design and incorporate the quality rating and improvement system for home-based, center-based, and school-based early child care and learning. Current law requires SDE to design this rating and improvement system.

Additionally, the bill requires OEC, instead of the “system,” to work with local and regional early childhood education councils to implement the coordinated system at the local level, and it permits OEC to enter into memoranda of agreement with and accept donations from nonprofit or philanthropic entities while administering the system.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

SDE PROGRAMS TRANSFERRED TO OEC

§§ 7-12 — *School Readiness*

Currently, school readiness develops a network of programs that increase the number of full-day, full-year spaces in accredited programs for children ages three to five who are ineligible to enroll in public school. The programs use preschool curriculum standards established by the State Board of Education. Under the bill, most of the substance and content of this program remains the same upon transfer to OEC, except as noted below.

The bill eliminates the requirement that the education commissioner, in consultation with the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) president, provide professional development for the staff of school readiness programs. This requirement is not reassigned to the OEC executive director.

It also eliminates the requirement that school readiness programs use the assessment measures developed under the interagency agreement on school readiness in conducting annual program evaluations.

The bill continues the \$8,346 per child cost ceiling for school

readiness programs.

By law, SDE and DSS must reach an agreement defining each agency's duties concerning school readiness programs. Under the bill, the OEC executive director, and the commissioners of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), DDS, and DPH must join these two agencies and instead develop an agreement on how each will implement the coordinated system of early care and education and child development.

The bill also eliminates the requirement that the agency commissioners (1) annually submit the interagency agreement to the Education Committee and the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and (2) develop school readiness program evaluation assessment measures.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

§ 28 — Subsidies for Purchase of Day Care Services

SDE currently administers a program that purchases or permits parents to purchase day care services using state subsidies. This program also provides grants to school readiness program providers to increase the number of hours of child day care services. The bill appoints the OEC executive director, rather than the SDE commissioner, to oversee the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

§ 68 — Family Resource Centers

Currently, this program provides many services to children and their families through centers located in or associated with public schools. Services include child care, remedial education and literacy, families-in-training programs, and supportive services to parents receiving Temporary Family Assistance. Under the bill, the substance of this program remains unchanged.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

DSS PROGRAMS TRANSFERRED TO OEC

§§ 20-26, 30-38 — *Child Day Care Services Lead Agency Duties*

By law, lead agency duties for child day care include: (1) taking inventory of available services and funding sources, (2) training day care providers, (3) establishing a performance-based evaluation system, and (4) developing a coordinated professional development system. Additionally, the lead agency oversees loan programs and grants for child care facilities. Under the bill, the substance of these duties remains unchanged.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013, except for the sections authorizing OEC to oversee funding of facilities, which take effect July 1, 2014.

§§ 15-17, 19, 27, 29 — *Federal and State Child Day Care Subsidizes – Care 4 Kids*

Under current law, Care 4 Kids helps low- to moderate-income families pay for child care costs. This program is partially funded by the federal Child Care Development Fund. Under the bill, the substance of this program remains unchanged.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

§§ 18, 39-41 — *Children’s Trust Fund*

By law, programs subsidized by the Children’s Trust Fund are (1) aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect or (2) are family resource programs. These programs are funded by grants administered by the Children’s Trust Fund Council. The bill permits the OEC executive director, rather than the DSS commissioner, to accept and receive bequests or gifts of personal property on behalf of the Children’s Trust Fund that are given for services to help people who are receiving or have immediately family members receiving services (1) from OEC, (2) formerly from DSS, or (3) potentially from OEC.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

§ 40 — *Kinship Fund; Grandparents and Relatives Respite Fund*

These family resource programs are subsidized by the Children’s Trust Fund. They provide grants to children’s court-appointed guardians, who may be grandparents or relative caretakers, for

housing, transportation, and child care expenses. Currently, DSS, in conjunction with the Children's Trust Fund Council, administers grants to fund these programs. Under the bill, OEC takes over DSS's role.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

§ 20 — Connecticut Charts-a-Course

The bill eliminates the requirement that DPH assist with the development and implementation of a statewide coordinated training system for child day care and early childhood education, commonly known as Connecticut Charts-a-Course. The bill also directs OEC to develop Connecticut Charts-a-Course with the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, instead of the Child Day Care Council.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

DDS PROGRAM TRANSFERRED TO OEC

§§ 43-47 — Birth-to-Three System

The Birth-to-Three System offers early intervention services to meet the developmental and health-related needs of infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities. It offers three programs: general programs, autism-specific programs, and hearing specialty programs. Under the bill, the substance of this system remains unchanged.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

DPH PROGRAMS TRANSFERRED TO OEC

§§ 48-61 — Licensing and Investigation of Child Day Care Services

Under current law, DPH performs day care licensing and investigation duties, including:

1. approving applications and revoking licenses of providers at child day care centers, group day care homes, and family day care homes;
2. conducting criminal history and child abuse registry records

- checks of providers and their employees;
- 3. investigating reports of child abuse or neglect involving facilities; and
- 4. periodically inspecting and seeking injunctions against facilities that violate regulations.

Under the bill, the substance of these duties remains unchanged.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

§§ 5-7, 11, 14-16, 21, 24, 28-29, 33-35 — TRANSFER OF GRANT AND LOAN PROGRAMS

The bill consolidates grant and loan programs administered by two different agencies into the proposed OEC. The majority of the substance and content of these programs remain the same under the bill, unless noted below.

Grants and Loan Programs Transferred to OEC

Table 1 describes the substance of the grant and loan programs.

Table 1: Grants and Loan Programs for Transfer

Grants / Loan Programs	Description
<i>State Department of Education</i>	
Priority school district grants for school readiness seats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-funded grant program that provides spaces in school readiness programs for eligible children in priority school districts and competitive grant municipalities
Competitive school district grant for preschool school readiness seats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant program allows competitive school districts to buy school readiness spaces in other districts
Transitional school district grants for school readiness seats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-funded grant program providing spaces in school readiness programs for eligible children in transitional school districts
Head Start Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal child development grant program benefitting nonprofit entities and boards of education in towns with children age birth to five receiving cash welfare benefits • SDE establishes competitive grant program for applicants and allocates funds
Competitive District Grant Account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains funds to be spent by education commissioner on competitive school district grants for school readiness seats
Subsidy program to purchase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program permits agency to buy, or have

day care services	<p>parents buy, day care services from schools, centers, homes, family resource centers, Head Start programs, or boards of education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also gives grants to school readiness program providers to increase their hours to provide day care services.
Supplemental quality enhancement grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded on a competitive basis to child day care and school readiness providers
Child care facilities loan guarantee program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantees loans for the expansion or development of child care and child development centers in the state. • Administering agency can enter into contracts with quasi-public agencies, banks, or nonprofits to administer the program. Agency must authorize all loan guarantees.
Child care facilities direct revolving loan program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to provide loans for costs incurred with the development of child care facilities. • Administering agency can enter into contracts with quasi-public agencies, banks, or nonprofits to administer the program. Agency must authorize all loan guarantees.
Debt service reserve fund for CHEFA-financed child care facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administering agency can allow actual debt service on loans, as well as determine the terms and amounts of the debt service.
<i>Department of Social Services</i>	
Grants for state and municipal employee child day care facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses proceeds of up to \$6,024,798 previously authorized state bonds to cover administrative costs of grants for planning, constructing, or renovating facilities for employee child care
Grants for use of schools as day care facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program for municipalities, boards of education, and child care providers to encourage use of school facilities for before- and after-school day care
Loans for business firm employee child day care facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program offers five-year loans at an interest rate established by the State Bond Commission for business firms to plan, construct, or renovate facilities for employee child care and child care for children in the firm's municipality • Administering agency's commissioner makes regulations that set the terms and conditions of the loans

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013, except for grants to child care facilities for state and municipal employees, subsidies to purchase day care services, and child care facilities loan and debt services programs, which take effect July 1, 2014.

SUBSTANTIVE GRANT AND LOAN PROGRAM CHANGES

§§ 6-7, 14 — *Competitive Grant Program*

The bill adds a new use for competitive grant program funds. Currently, the law permits funds to be used to provide spaces in accredited school readiness programs. Under the bill, these funds also can be used to provide “wraparound” services to children and their families (e.g., family engagement; parent leadership; physical, dental, and mental health programs; early childhood development). It makes a conforming change in the law establishing the grant funding source.

The bill also eliminates the authority of towns that received priority school district school readiness grants in FY 10 to continue to receive the grant in perpetuity if they no longer meet grant eligibility criteria in FY 11 and beyond.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

§ 24 — Grants for Use of Schools as Day Care Facilities

The bill requires the SDE commissioner, instead of the DSS commissioner, to run the program that provides grants to municipalities, local school boards, and child care providers to encourage the use of school facilities for before- and after-school child day care.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

CABINETS AND COUNCILS

§ 9 — Local School Readiness Councils

The bill requires local school readiness councils to cooperate with OEC during evaluation of school readiness program effectiveness and report evaluation results to OEC, rather than SDE. These councils advise their district’s chief elected official and superintendent on issues relating to school readiness.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

§ 13 — Early Childhood Education Cabinet

The bill assigns to the Early Childhood Education Cabinet the new duty of assisting OEC in administering the coordinated system of early care and education and child development. This responsibility

replaces the cabinet's existing duty to coordinate services among state agencies to enhance the health, safety, and learning of children from birth to age nine.

The bill also reconstitutes the cabinet, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Early Childhood Cabinet Membership

<i>New Members</i>	<i>Appointing Authority</i>
OEC executive director, or designee	n/a
BOR president, or designee	n/a
Member of school board in Alliance District town	House speaker
Parent of a child attending school in education reform district	House speaker
Preschool program instructor	Senate president pro tempore
<i>Removed Members</i>	
SDE representative responsible for programs required under the federal IDEA	SDE commissioner
Higher education institution representative	BOR president
House member	House speaker
Senate member	Senate president pro tempore
Parent of child attending priority school district	House speaker
<i>Remaining Members</i>	
SDE commissioner, or designee	n/a
DSS commissioner, or designee	n/a
DPH commissioner, or designee	n/a
DDS commissioner, or designee	n/a
DCF commissioner, or designee	n/a
Commission on children executive director, or designee	n/a
Project director of Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office	n/a
Parent of child who attends or attended school readiness program	House minority leader
Local provider of early childhood education	Senate minority leader
Representative of Connecticut Family Resource Center Alliance	House majority leader
Representative of a state-funded child day care center	Senate majority leader
Representative of public elementary school with a pre-kindergarten program	Senate president pro tempore
Representative of Connecticut Head Start Association	Governor
Representative of the state business or philanthropic community	Governor
OPM secretary, or designee	n/a

The bill replaces the governor's authority to appoint one cabinet chair from the members. Instead, the OEC executive director and a gubernatorial appointee from among the members serve as co-chairs.

Under the bill, the cabinet must meet at least quarterly. All cabinet members serve without pay and are deemed to have resigned if they miss at least half the meetings in a calendar year.

The bill moves the cabinet from SDE to OEC for administrative purposes only.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

§ 42 — *Children’s Trust Fund Council*

The bill adds the OEC executive director to the Children’s Trust Fund Council, bringing its total membership to 17. By law, the council must advise the Children’s Trust Fund and use its resources to fund programming. Orders and regulations issued by the council since September 1, 2009 are considered to be that of OEC under the bill.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

OTHER CHANGES

§ 17 — *Collective Bargaining*

The bill requires OEC, rather than DSS, to be an executive branch employer that bargains with unions representing family child care providers.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

§§ 15, 19 — *Federal Child Care and Development Fund and Utilization of Federal Programs*

The bill replaces DSS with OEC as the state agency for administering the federal block grant that provides much of the funding for the state’s child care programs. It also permits the OEC executive director, rather than the DSS commissioner, to take advantage of federally assisted day care programming and programming created under the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which includes Head Start.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

§§ 65, 66 — Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect and Disclosure of DSS Records

As a conforming change, the bill adds to the list of mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect any OEC employee responsible for licensing day care centers, group day care homes, or family day care homes. It continues to require DPH employees responsible for licensing youth camps to report, since youth camp licensure remains within DPH.

The bill makes a parallel change concerning disclosure of DSS records.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

§§ 68, 69 — Family Resource Center and Regression Discontinuity Studies

The bill requires OEC, in consultation with the SDE commissioner, to conduct longitudinal studies of family resource centers (FRCs) every three years. Currently, SDE alone must conduct such studies.

The bill also requires OEC to conduct a regression discontinuity study of all state-funded early childhood programs in Connecticut to determine the kindergarten readiness of each child enrolled for the 2013-14 school year. Regression discontinuity design measures children both before and after their participation in the program being studied. OEC must report its findings to the Education Committee by January 1, 2015.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

§ 70 — Information Sharing System

The bill requires OEC to collaborate with SDE and the Governor's Early Care and Education Cabinet to develop a system that shares information between preschool or school readiness programs and kindergarten programs. Currently, SDE alone must collaborate with the cabinet. The shared information concerns children's oral language and pre-literacy proficiency.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

BACKGROUND

Coordinated System of Early Care and Education and Child Development

The coordinated system must accomplish 25 tasks that address the following areas:

1. program reporting and data analysis,
2. student assessments,
3. program assessments,
4. family and parental involvement,
5. outreach and coordination,
6. funding,
7. licensing, and
8. professional development (CGS § 10-16bb (b)).

Related Bill

sHB 6624 (File 554), requires the coordinated system of early care and education and child development to compare and analyze data collected by the state longitudinal data system.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference
Yea 25 Nay 0 (03/28/2013)

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 41 Nay 8 (04/12/2013)