

Questions for the Nominee for Office of Early Childhood Commissioner

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Commissioner of Early Childhood ([CGS §§ 10-500; 4-5 to 4-8](#))

The commissioner leads the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and oversees the state's system of early care and education for young children. The commissioner supervises the office, which administers the following programs, among others:

1. school readiness, which funds accredited educational programs for three-to-five-year-olds;
2. Smart Start, a competitive grant program for boards of education to establish or expand preschool programs;
3. a statewide training and professional development registry for child care and early childhood education staff;
4. Care 4 Kids, a child care subsidy program funded by the state and federal government;
5. child care services management, evaluation, and professional development;
6. child care facilities licensing and inspection;
7. youth camp oversight; and
8. family support programs, including the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program.

Questions

1. By law, the OEC commissioner must collaborate with groups such as the Early Childhood Cabinet and the Home Visitation Program Consortium. How do you plan to facilitate such collaborations, and what do you hope to learn from these groups?
2. Many programs that benefit children enrolled in child care and preschool depend in part on federal grants, such as Head Start and the Care 4 Kids child care subsidy. What steps should OEC take to protect these programs' federal funding?
3. While the compulsory age of school enrollment in Connecticut is five years old, parents have the option to not send their child to school until the child is six or seven years old ([CGS § 10-184](#)). As a result, some kindergarten classrooms have an age range greater than one year. In a 2015 report commissioned by the General Assembly in [Public Act 14-39](#), OEC recommended ending this practice. What are your thoughts on this issue?
4. This session, the governor proposed in [HB 7035](#) that OEC require comprehensive background checks at least every five years (that include state and national criminal history checks already required in law) of all prospective employees of child care centers, group and family child care homes, and child care providers who receive Care 4 Kids subsidies. What do you think would be an appropriate scope for such checks, and what are your thoughts on their proposed frequency?
5. OEC's 2016 Annual Early Childhood Accountability Report cited four deaths in child care facilities that year, with two occurring at licensed programs and two at unlicensed programs. What efforts should OEC take to prevent such tragedies from occurring? What types of action should the office take with respect to unlicensed child care programs?
6. One of the duties of OEC is to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive statewide professional development system for staff of early childhood care and education and child development programs. What types of professional development should the office encourage staff to pursue?
7. Beginning July 1, 2017, state law requires that at least 50% of staff who have primary classroom responsibility in a state-funded child care or school readiness program hold a bachelor's degree, and that 100% of staff meet this credential by 2020 ([CGS § 10-16p](#)). The General Assembly commissioned a report from OEC on how to assist providers with meeting this goal and increase staff compensation ([PA 15-134](#)). What can the state do to retain more highly qualified staff in school readiness programs, considering that they may leave the profession for better paying positions once they earn their degree?

8. OEC may enter into memoranda of agreement with, and accept donations from, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations ([CGS § 10-500](#)). Are there any organizations you would like to see OEC partner with?

9. One of the office's duties is to develop early learning and development standards for early care and education providers to use. What is your philosophy on how such standards should be developed?

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