

## Questions for the Office of Early Childhood Commissioner Nominee

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### Commissioner of Early Childhood ([CGS § 10-500](#))

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. 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?
2. One of OEC's duties 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?

3. What early childhood policy issues do you believe the General Assembly should prioritize this session?
4. Last session, the legislature again delayed the implementation of heightened staff qualifications for state-funded school readiness programs ([PA 18-123](#)). Under the new law, at least 50% of staff who have primary classroom responsibility generally must hold a bachelor's degree by July 1, 2020; and 100% of staff must meet this credential by July 1, 2023. What obstacles have led to the repeated extension of these deadlines?
5. In 2017, the legislature allowed school readiness staff applicants who have associate or bachelor's degrees with an early childhood concentration from out-of-state institutions to submit their credentials to OEC for review ([PA 17-41](#)). In the year-and-a-half since this law has taken effect, has the office seen an increase in such applicants? Has this eligibility expansion helped the state meet its goal of heightened school readiness staff qualifications?
6. In August and again in December of 2016, OEC eliminated Care 4 Kids child care subsidy eligibility for certain families due to budgetary issues. The *CT Mirror* [reported](#) that when OEC reopened and widened availability in November 2017, the office found a 30% reduction in program participation. Has the office been able to help these families return to the program in the time since?
7. In December 2018, the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) released a [report](#) that investigated the deaths of nine children in licensed and unlicensed child care settings that occurred between March 2016 and November 2017. How is OEC addressing these increasingly frequent tragic events?
8. In recent years, much attention has been given to safety and security in K-12 public and private school buildings. In your opinion, should this attention be expanded to include early childhood education centers?
9. OEC is in the process of rolling out a quality rating and improvement system for child care centers and homes. What is your vision for how the office will utilize the system?

10. Last year, the legislature passed a law allowing OEC to use up to 2% of the total amount appropriated for five early childhood programs to fund innovative, results-driven service delivery pilots; program evaluation and improvement; and interagency collaboration; among other things ([PA 18-184](#)). Has the office chosen to exercise this authority and, if so, on what kinds of efforts?

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