

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 OEC'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. The office must ensure a coordinated and comprehensive statewide professional development system for early childhood care and education staff and child development programs. Has the agency accomplished a professional development system? In an already under-paid profession, is it difficult to get staff to take time to do professional development when there is no guarantee it will lead to additional pay?
3. What early childhood policy issues do you believe the General Assembly should prioritize this session?
4. By law, the staff qualifications for state-funded school readiness programs are gradually raised in a series of steps from 2022 to 2029 by which time all early childhood teachers must hold a (1) bachelor's or associates degree with at least a minimum number of early childhood credits or (2) teacher's certification or an early childhood teacher credential ([CGS § 10-16p\(b\)](#)). Considering how difficult it is to recruit and retain staff for these programs, do you see these requirements as an obstacle for the state achieving a fully staffed early childhood workforce?
5. Last year's budget implementer required OEC to establish and administer the Start Early- Early Child Development Initiative. Among other things, the office must develop funding priorities for early education and support services through a grant program for research and early education service providers ([PA 22-118, § 459](#)). The law allows OEC to use American Rescue Plan Act funds to do so. What is the status of OEC's development of this grant program?
6. Last session, the legislature passed a law requiring the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) to develop a plan to increase the number of child care facilities on or near each regional community-technical college and state university campus, and to submit the plan to the Appropriations and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees by January 1, 2023. Among other things, the plan must include the development, expansion, and maintenance of these facilities that provide evening and weekend child care services in accordance with college or university course schedules ([PA 22-101, § 8](#)). Has OEC been working with BOR to assist in the development of this plan?
7. The CT Mirror recently [reported](#) that OEC and UConn completed reports on the economics of [child care centers](#) and [home-based child care businesses](#). What are some of the biggest findings from these reports, and how will they inform OEC's 2023 legislative agenda?
8. Last year's budget implementer ([PA 22-118, § 259](#)) required OEC to administer an emergency stabilization grant program for certain school readiness programs and child care centers receiving state financial assistance. These grants are intended to help keep

programs' doors open and staff paid as the pandemic drags on. Can you provide an update on this grant program, including how many centers and programs have received grants?

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 this system?
10. Last year, the legislature appropriated \$70 million to OEC to administer a wage supplement grant program for Connecticut child care workers in FY 23 ([PA 22-80](#)). How has the office chosen to administer these payments? Will the office assess whether these grants have an impact on boosting recruitment and retention of early child care staff?

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