Ned Lamont
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Susan Bysiewicz

Lt. Governor

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Beth Bye
Commissioner

DATE: July 26, 2021 REVISED September 1, 2021 REVISED January 19, 2022

TO: School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start funded programs

FROM: Beth Bye, Commissioner

RE: Coronavirus Memo #43 REVISED
FY 22 Funding for School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start

September 1, 2021	Update: Edit opening paragraph to remove references to summer 2021; removes reference to remote and hybrid learning; provide funding eligibility criteria for OEC funded SR, CDC and SS programs; add section on Operational Expense Supplement; CDC enrollment eligibility changes SFY22.
January 28, 2022	Update: Included Smart Start in heading; added to section on Operational Expense Supplement to extend through June 2022; transferred sections from Memo 42 relating to School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start funding calculations; added new item on payment of full allocations and monthly reports.

Working with the Lamont administration, the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is providing funds to support the goal of assuring families have access to early childhood services and the early childhood infrastructure by adapting its funding structures for School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start programs during the COVID-19 recovery phase. Due to the impact of COVID-19 OEC is committed to continuing to provide fiscal supports for families and for program operations.

This memo sets out changes to OEC policies and explains the distribution of additional funding to support child enrollment, help families and support program stability as they recover from the educational and fiscal impacts of COVID-19.

School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start Funding
The Office of Early Childhood will provide funding to School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start programs that:
   a. are open to serve children on-site, or
   b. close temporarily due to local health or a governing body decision.
Programs, or sites within a multi-site organization, that are not open to serve children will not receive funding.

In-person/on-site care and education remains a priority. If remote learning is offered to engage families in their children's learning while a program is closed temporarily due to a COVID-19 exposure, notification to the OEC program manager should be made within 72 hours. Programs that offer a remote learning option to support temporary closures should refer to Remote Learning Guidance for Preschool. It is especially important that programs and liaisons maintain current contact information with OEC, especially during the public health emergency. If necessary, the OEC will provide more specific information including requirements and additional guidance related to remote and hybrid learning.

1. The SFY22 funding calculations for School Readiness and Child Day Care are based on per child reimbursement rates for children receiving on-site services.
   a. Child Day Care reimbursement for school age care shall align with contracted services.
2. Smart Start programs shall maintain enrollment of children funded through Smart Start as well as up to 3 additional children as outlined in the approved FY 22-24 Continuation Grant application.
3. For January, February and March 2022, the OEC will provide full funding allocations to School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start programs for sites that meet the funding requirements for State-Funded Programs.
   a. Monthly reports shall be submitted according to the established deadlines and should accurately reflect the actual number of children receiving on-site services at least one day during the reporting period.

Operational Expense Supplement
For the period July 1, 2021 through the June 2022 reporting period, the OEC will fund School Readiness and Child Day Care programs based on per child reimbursement for children in attendance at least one day during the reporting period, and will also provide, as needed, up to a 25% Operational Expense Supplement, not to exceed the full funding allocation.

1. Eligible program sites may receive an Operational Expense Supplement in an amount **up to** 25% of their current month's funding allocation.
   a. Only program sites that provide on-site services during the reporting period are eligible to receive the Operational Expense Supplement.

   b. Space shifts between programs and/or space type conversions may result in an increase or decrease of the Operational Expense Supplement the program may receive.
   c. When one or more of a program's sites did not provide on-site services during the reporting period, the Operational Expense Supplement will be prorated and

reimbursement will be impacted according to contractual or policy guidance, as applicable.

   i. Programs must notify the OEC Program Manager of sites that did not provide services for the full reporting period within one week from the close of that reporting period.

2. The maximum Operational Expense Supplement for each program will auto-calculate when completing the monthly report by entering the number of children receiving on-site services a minimum of one day during the reporting period.

   a. The amount of the Operational Expense Supplement the program is eligible to receive will decrease as the funds earned based on per child utilization increases.

   b. The total payment the program is eligible to receive includes:

      i. funds earned based on utilization, plus

      ii. final adjusted Operational Expense Supplement.

   c. Payments including the Operational Expense Supplement may not exceed the program's current month's allocation.

3. School Readiness only

   a. The Operational Expense Supplement will be paid from each program's approved FY22 School Readiness Grant allocation.

      i. Districts shall submit fund requests through eGMS and distribute payments to programs in accordance with FY22 School Readiness payment processing guidance.

4. Child Day Care only

   a. The Operational Expense Supplement funds are incorporated into the maximum contract value for services, as necessary.

      i. Quarterly payments will be made according to the schedule in the contractual agreement with reconciliation conducted for enrollment of less than 75% of contracted capacity, and any reconciliation adjustments remaining from SFY 2021.

      ii. CHEFA intercepts will be deducted from the 2nd and 4th quarterly payments for applicable programs.

5. The Operational Expense Supplement is funded by the same source of funds used for monthly payments for School Readiness, and Child Day Care.

6. The Operational Expense Supplement is not applicable during reporting periods the OEC provides full funding allocations.

Child Day Care Enrollment Eligibility Change

For the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 (State Fiscal Year 2022), Child Day Care Programs may enroll up to forty percent (40%) of families whose income is at or above 75% of the state median income. In alignment with School Readiness, sixty percent (60%) of enrolled Child Day Care families must fall below 75% of the state median income. Once enrolled in a Child Day Care space, families will remain eligible until their youngest child ages out. It is the program's responsibility to monitor this ratio and maintain documentation. This is a temporary change through June 30th 2022.

Summer Family Fee Replacement Payment

1.   To assist families and assist programs in ensuring continuity of care for children during the summer months, a family fee payment will be provided by OEC to programs for preschool age children, on behalf of families. These payments will be made directly to

School Readiness and Child Day Care programs located in priority districts, and for families under 75% of State Median income in competitive districts, or to eligible facilities as notified by OEC. To be eligible all programs must meet the following requirements:

      a.   provide full-day, part-day, or wrap-around care for preschool children;

      b.   operate during the months of July _and_ August; and

      c.   be in good standing with funding requirements.

2.   The average per child family fee summer payment rate will be calculated at $145 per child and will be based on 90% of capacity during the months of July and August.

      a.   For example: The payment for a program that has a capacity of 95 School Readiness spaces and 30 Child Day Care Preschool spaces would be calculated as follows:

    95 SR capacity + 30 CDC preschool capacity = 125 state-funded preschool spaces
    125 state-funded preschool spaces x 90% = 112.5 rounded up to 113 spaces
    113 preschool spaces x $145 per child = $16,385 per month
    $16,385 x 2 summer months = $32,770 total family fee summer payment

3.   Programs must waive collection of family fees for the months of July and August, for which they will be receiving this replacement payment. Programs will credit families who have made payments for July and August. Programs may not charge families the difference between their family fee and the amount received from the OEC Summer Family Fee Replacement Payment.

4.   If the actual family fees the program would collect during July and August exceeds the amount received from the OEC Summer Family Fee Replacement Payment, programs may submit a request on the form provided by the OEC.

      a.   Forms can be obtained from OEC program managers.

      b.   Requests shall be submitted to oec.statefunded@ct.gov for approval of additional funds.

      c.   Programs shall maintain documentation justifying the request to be made available to OEC upon request.

      d.   All requests must be submitted by Friday, August 27, 2021.

5.   Programs will not report the family fee summer payment in the July or August state-funded monthly reports.

Summer Activity Support Payment

Programs may apply to the OEC for funds for enrichment activities held at the program or field trips, including costs such as speaker fees, transportation, and family participation fees. A simple application with instructions and deadline information will be provided by OEC to programs. Programs are required to maintain appropriate documentation of activity expenses (e.g. receipts, agreements, and/or invoices) for OEC review upon request.