

# OEC Partnership with NAEYC to Support Quality Improvement in Connecticut

Elevate is Connecticut's quality improvement system for licensed and license-exempt child care programs in family, group, and center-based settings. The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) built Elevate to bridge existing state-level systems for health and safety compliance to national accreditation with tools and resources providers need to improve their programs over time. Our system offers simple and accessible resources for providers and actionable information about quality for families.

Elevate offers 3 levels of engagement: Member, Member+, and Member Accredited. Licensed and license-exempt child care providers start out as Members. Member+ is for providers who created an Elevate Program Plan to demonstrate their commitment to continuing to improve the care they offer. Becoming accredited is the final level of engagement in Elevate. Accreditation demonstrates providers meet nationally recognized quality standards. With Elevate, providers control their engagement in quality improvement and families have the information they need to make informed choices.

## What role does accreditation have in the system?

Accreditation is the foundation for the OEC's current vision of quality. With Elevate, we define high quality using standards for accreditation and Head Start approval. Connecticut requires School Readiness, Child Day Care Contracts, and Smart Start programs to be accredited to receive state funding. Since 1997, School Readiness legislation has funded accreditation support to improve programs. More recently, Staffed Family Child Care Networks – community initiatives that have paid staff with expertise helping family child care providers – support accreditation and quality improvement. The Care4Kids subsidy system reimbursement rates also include a bonus for each child enrolled in an NAFCC or NAEYC accredited program.

## Why partner with NAEYC?

The OEC partnered with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to identify pathways for licensed programs to move toward accreditation. NAEYC has a long history of supporting quality improvement in early childhood education in the United States and abroad. First launched in 1985, the system for NAEYC Accreditation of Early Learning Programs changed the field by shifting its focus from basic health and safety to a broader conceptualization of early learning and development. In 2017, NAEYC piloted and launched a streamlined accreditation system based on indicators that are predictive of quality. Elevate was built on accreditation performance data from Connecticut programs. Partnering with NAEYC gave Elevate a streamlined infrastructure based on proven approaches to strengthen programs through continuous improvement.

## Why partner with Connecticut?

NAEYC has a long history of connection with the state of Connecticut, and Elevate is one step toward a deeper connection. Connecticut has always supported NAEYC accreditation. At the launch of Elevate, Connecticut had one of the highest numbers of accredited programs in the country. NAEYC knows that quality lives in Connecticut and Connecticut's quality improvement system is like no other system across the country. In other states, systems offer programs credit for accreditation, but these states have not built quality into the fabric of the system. NAEYC sees Elevate as the model for future work in the quality improvement space. NAEYC also plans to help other states look to the work that has happened in Connecticut to inform their future system changes.

Since 1997, School Readiness legislation has funded accreditation support to improve programs and has used NAEYC Accreditation to give parents a clear way to identify program quality. Michelle Kang, NAEYC's Chief Executive Officer explains, **"NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation provides a roadmap for early learning programs to engage in quality. When early learning programs engage in accreditation, they are actively supporting children's health, learning, and connection with the world around them. Children, educators, and families all benefit from NAEYC accredited early learning programs."** State reimbursement rates also include a bonus for each child enrolled in an accredited program.

**Both the State of Connecticut and NAEYC are excited to move forward in this partnership. Please watch for future updates as our work progresses.**