STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Connecticut Office of **Early Childhood**

Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program
General Policy B-05
Meeting Quality Assurance Requirements

 X OEC Child Day Care Contractors
 X OEC Competitive School Readiness Municipalities
 X OEC Priority School Readiness Districts
 X OEC State Head Start Supplement
 X OEC Smart Start

General Policy B-05 (GP B-05) provides guidance to programs and communities on meeting legislative and contractual requirements for Quality Assurance Measures such as National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation and Head Start Approval. These guidelines apply to School Readiness (SR) sub-grantees (Priority and Competitive Programs), Smart Start (SS) grantees, and Child Day Care (CDC) contractors and sub-contractors. GP B-05 refers to all of them with the general term "OEC-funded early care and education programs".

The content of GP B-05 is organized in five sections as follows:
  I.   Definitions;
 II.   Policy;
III.   Alternative Interim Quality Assurance Process;
 IV.   Loss of NAEYC Accreditation; and
  V.   Removal of OEC funds

It is the responsibility of the OEC-funded early care and education programs' administrator(s) [1] and Contractors to understand and adhere to the content of GP B-05.

I.   DEFINITIONS

   A. **"Accredited"** or **"Accreditation"** for facilities that serve infants, toddlers or preschoolers, means accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
   B. **"Alternative Interim Quality Assurance Process"** is the OEC-internally designed process for quality improvement monitoring of OEC-funded early care and education programs that are not Head Start Approved or NAEYC Accredited or have lost or surrender Accreditation.
   C. **"Federal Monitoring Review"** is the periodic review, including site visits, conducted by the Office of Head Start (OHS) of all Head Start programs as required by the Head Start Act.
   D. **"Head Start Approval"** means designation by the Office of Head Start (OHS), Administration for Children & Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that a program is a Head Start grantee or delegate.

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[1] For School Readiness: The School Readiness Liaison; for Smart Start: The Board of Education; for Child Day Care: The Contractor.

E. **"Monitoring Review Reports"** provide Head Start grantees with information regarding their performance and compliance with Head Start requirements including regulations specified in the Head Start Act and all applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards.

F. **"Quality improvement monitoring"** is an assessment of how OEC-funded early care and education programs perform according to appropriate legislative, contractual and administrative standards. It is based on data collected from Accreditation and Head Start Approval tools and reports and other data including but not limited to licensing inspections, compliance with the OEC Registry and Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) reporting, Environment Rating Scales, and/or Program Administration Scale.[2]

G. **"Quality Improvement Plans-QIPs"** are submitted to HHS by Head Start grantees with one or more deficiencies identified in a Monitoring Review Report. QIPs must specify, for each identified deficiency, the actions the grantee will take to correct the deficiency and the timeframe.

H. **"NAEYC"** is the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the professional membership organization that administers NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation.

I. **"Notice of Grant Award-NoA"** is the HHS document given to an organization indicating an award has been made, the amount of Federal funds authorized and the budget period for the approved project.

J. **"Program Improvement Plan"** is the written product of a process for continuous quality improvement through the identification of an OEC-funded early care and education program's strengths and areas for betterment.

K. **"Quality Assurance"** is the systematic measurement, comparison with a standard, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback loop such as those afforded by NAEYC Accreditation and Head Start Approval to ensure that standards of quality are being met.

II. POLICY

A. Quality Assurance Requirements

1. OEC-funded early care and education programs are required to achieve NAEYC Accreditation or Head Start Approval in accordance with legislative and contractual requirements.
   a. School Readiness sites must achieve NAEYC Accreditation within three years of the date when children funded through School Readiness begin attending the program[3]. School Readiness sites that are Head Start Approved may use this designation to meet this requirement.
   a. Accreditation is required of all OEC sites where Smart Start funds are utilized[4].
   b. Child Day Care current contractor/sub-contractor facilities that serve infants, toddlers or preschoolers must be Accredited or hold Head Start Approval[5]; new sub-contractors facilities must achieve Accreditation within a three-year window from the date upon which they first became a subcontractor[6].

2. OEC-funded early care and education programs agree that Accreditation is granted to the overall program, not to individual classes within a program. This includes classes within the program that operate during the summer.

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[2] Talan, T. N. & Bloom, P. J. (2011). *Program Administration Scale (PAS) Measuring Early Childhood Leadership and Management*. New York: Teachers College Press.
[3] C.G.S. 10-16p
[4] C.G.S. 10-506
[5] Contractual Citations C.1.a.(1) (a) and (b), page 11
[6] Contractual Citations C.1.a.(2) (a) and (c), page 11

a. If a program or classroom(s) located in a facility seeking Accreditation wants to be excluded, it must be able to demonstrate all of the following: a separate budget, administration, and license or that it is license-exempt[7].

b. All programs pursuing Accreditation or renewal must notify NAEYC of all separate programs that operate within its facility.
   i. Such notification must be included in the NAEYC application, candidacy and renewal.
   ii. Smart Start grantees and Child Day Care Contractors must also notify the OEC program manager in writing of other classrooms located within their site(s) NOT included in the Accreditation.
   iii. School Readiness sub-grantees must notify the School Readiness liaisons, who, in turn, shall notify the OEC program manager in writing.

3. When new or additional funding is awarded to an Accredited OEC early care and education funded facility, it is the responsibility of the program's administrator to meet NAEYC's requirements regarding the reporting of any programmatic changes[8].

4. Additional funding to an already OEC-funded early care and education program in the process of seeking Accreditation does not 'reset the clock' to a new three-year timeframe. For OEC-funded early care and education programs not already Accredited, the three-year timeline for achieving Accreditation applies based on the earliest funding start date at the specific site(s) as recorded by the OEC.

5. An OEC-funded early care and education program that has not been through the accreditation process successfully or has not maintained accreditation shall NOT become a satellite location to an already Accredited site as means to achieve Accreditation.

6. OEC-funded early care and education programs shall report to the OEC Registry, as indicated in the OEC Reporting Requirements[9], their compliance with Quality Assurance Measures including, but not limited to, NAEYC Accreditation or Head Start Approval, as follows:
   a. NAEYC Accreditation documentation:
      i. Submission of email confirmation of NAEYC annual reports within 30 days of receipt;
      ii. NAEYC Accreditation/renewal/loss of accreditation decision reports within 72 hours of receipt; and
      iii. Notice and results of (announced or unannounced) verification visit within 72 hours of receipt.
   b. Submission of a OHS-ACF Monitoring Review Report or a successor instrument pursuant to federal regulations within 30 days of receipt.
   c. Evidence of results of annual environment rating scale assessment if the program is within its three (3) years of initial funding and has not yet achieved NAEYC Accreditation or Head Start Approval requirements.

7. OEC-funded early care and education programs agree to provide the above reports/documentation and additional reports/documentation as requested by the OEC, within timelines prescribed. The OEC-funded early care and education programs shall maintain all reporting documents and make them available to the OEC upon request.

8. OEC-funded early care and education programs shall maintain an annual written program improvement plan based on data collected from Accreditation tools and reports, OHS

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[7] National Association for the Education of Young Children. 2018. Retrieved, July 18, 2018.
[8] https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/early-learning/update
[9] https://www.ct.gov/oec/lib/oec/earlycare/ece_reporting_requirements.pdf

Monitoring Review reports, and other data including but not limited to licensing inspections, Environment Rating Scales, and/or Program Administration Scale. The written plan shall identify timelines, responsible parties, progress and goals, and shall refer to and build upon previous annual plans. The administrator(s) for OEC-funded early care and education program(s) shall provide evidence of program improvement planning for review by the OEC Program Manager upon request.

9. OEC-funded early care and education programs agree that the OEC shall have access to their child care facilities and business offices, if different, during business hours, and further agree to provide copies of any record requested by the OEC.

10. Kindergarten classrooms are not required to meet OEC Quality Assurance-related requirements. The local or regional board of education's preK-3rd grade plan may require Accreditation as part of an on-going commitment to high-quality early learning.

B. Extension Requests

1. Under specific circumstances, a newly funded program may submit a one-time extension request to the three-year timeline for achieving Accreditation or Head Start Approval or refunding (CGS 10-16p). The OEC Program Manager shall implement the extension request procedure as follows:
   a. The program's administrator must notify the OEC in writing of the need for an extension.
   b. The extension request submitted by the program's administrator must include:
      i. detailed information regarding the rationale for the request;
      ii. specific time-lines addressing the process for current Accreditation or Head Star Approval or refunding; and
      iii. the proposed extension term.

2. Upon review the OEC may grant an extension which will stipulate:
   a. The approved specific time period during which the program must develop and implement a program improvement action plan and timeline for completion of the Accreditation process or obtain HHS written notification regarding QIP approval; and
   b. The Alternative Interim Quality Assurance Process in which the program must participate.

3. Should OEC quality improvement monitoring toward achieving Accreditation or Head Start Approval finds the site negligent in addressing areas of concern, the OEC may reallocate funding to another program or site

4. OEC-funded early care and education programs seeking Accreditation renewal or appealing HHS letter(s) of termination or denial of refunding are not eligible for an extension.

III. ALTERNATIVE INTERIM QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

A. OEC-funded early care and education programs that are not NAEYC Accredited or Head Start Approved shall participate in the Alternative Interim Quality Assurance Process, which includes:

1. On-site quality improvement monitoring conducted by OEC staff;
2. An environmental assessment using an early childhood environment rating scale conducted by an OEC approved rater, at the program's expense;

3. Within a month following the issuance of the results of the environment rating scale assessment, or upon request, submit to the OEC Program Manager a written detailed program improvement action plan to address:
   a. identified issues,
   b. responsible staff,
   c. specific dates and timelines, and
   d. an up-to-date plan and timeline of steps met and to be taken to achieve Accreditation or Head Start Approval.

B. If, in the sole judgment of the OEC, a facility does not make sufficient progress toward achieving Accreditation or Head Start Approval within a specified timeframe, or if the facility is negligent in addressing areas of concern, the OEC may, depending on the funding stream:

   1. reimburse the CDC contractor at the unaccredited rate for the balance of the contract period or reduce the funding in the contract; or
   2. reallocate School Readiness or Smart Start funding to another program or site.

IV.   LOSS OF ACCREDITATION OR HEAD START APPROVAL

A. OEC-funded early care and education programs that lose Accreditation or Head Start Approval through deferral, denial, revocation or inability to complete the renewal NAEYC timeline process must:

   1. Within 72 hours of receipt from NAEYC or the Office of Head Start, submit to the OEC Program Manager, and School Readiness Liaison if applicable, the Accreditation Decision Report or OHS letter of termination or denial of refunding.
   2. Within a week, meet with the OEC Program Manager to:
      a. address the specific reason(s) for the loss of Accreditation or Head Start Approval and discuss options for continued state funding eligibility or removal of state funds.
      b. submit a written detailed program improvement action plan, including a copy of the QIP in the case of a Head Start grantee, to address:
         i. identified issues,
         ii. responsible staff,
         iii. specific dates and timelines, and
         iv. steps to be taken to achieve Accreditation.

B. The OEC will review the detailed program improvement action plan and QIP if applicable and notify the OEC-funded early care and education program(s) regarding next steps.

C. Application as a satellite location will NOT satisfy the NAEYC Accreditation requirement.

V.   REMOVAL OF STATE FUNDS

A. OEC-funded early care and education programs that fail to achieve or maintain Accreditation or Head Start Approval in accordance with legislative and contractual requirements must notify the OEC Program Manager. OEC-funded early care and education programs receiving School Readiness and/or Smart Start funds shall submit written notification signed by the Mayor/Chief Elected Official and Superintendent.

B. The OEC Program Manager will inform the OEC-funded early care and education program the date when enrollment of new children must be stopped and will identify the date when access to state funds will cease.

C. OEC-funded School Readiness program(s)' administrator(s) and the School Readiness Liaison(s) —working collaboratively with the School Readiness Council(s)— must:

1. Communicate in writing to families that the program has lost OEC-funding because it did not meet the OEC requirement to achieve or maintain Accreditation or Head Start Approval and that families have the following options:
   a. Continue on the same type of OEC-funded space at another program approved by the OEC and, if applicable, by the School Readiness Council and Liaison;
   b. Remain at the program with the family paying the program fee; or
   c. Connect with 211 Child Care to explore other child care availability.
2. Explore available program options in the community in order to transfer the spaces in a timely fashion.
3. Work to transfer the spaces to another program (if School Readiness, another School Readiness funded program) no later than the end of the grant/contract period.
4. Put forward proposed sites for space reallocation to the OEC for approval.
5. OEC will review and contact options available locally. Upon OEC approval, the transfer of spaces to a selected program(s) will be authorized.

D. Programs that experience a removal of OEC funding and subsequently achieve NAEYC Accreditation or Head Start Approval may apply to be considered for this funding in a future grant cycle.

For further information concerning this GENERAL POLICY please contact the OEC program manager. If you're not sure who that is, visit: https://www.ctoec.org/contact-us/