



STATE OF CONNECTICUT



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, National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) 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. Quality Assurance Requirements;
- III. Extension Requests;
- IV. Interim Quality Assurance Process;
- V. Loss of Accreditation or Head Start Approval; and
- VI. Removal of OEC funds

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) or National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC).
- B. **“Accredit by date”** is the three year timeframe from the time children first attend the program, that the program must successfully complete the accreditation process or obtain Head Start Approval.
- C. **“Environmental Rating Scales”** (ERS) are structured observation tools that are used to assess the quality of children’s experiences in a child care setting.

- D. **“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.
- E. **“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.
- F. **“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, NAEYC or NAFCC accredited or have lost or surrender accreditation.
- G. **“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.
- H. **“Quality improvement monitoring”** is an assessment of how OEC-funded early care and education programs perform according to applicable 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 ECE Reporter, Environment Rating Scales, and/or Program Administration Scale.
- I. **“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.
- J. **“NAEYC”** is the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the professional membership organization that administers NAEYC Early Learning Program accreditation.
- K. **“NAFCC”** is the National Association of Family Child Care, the professional membership organization that administers Family Child Care accreditation.
- L. **“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.
- M. **“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.
- N. **“Quality Assurance”** is the systematic measurement, comparison with a standard, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback loop such as those afforded by NAEYC or NAFCC accreditation and Head Start Approval to ensure that standards of quality are being met.

II. QUALITY ASSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

- A. OEC-funded early care and education programs and family child care programs are required to achieve accreditation or Head Start Approval in accordance with legislative and contractual requirements.
1. School Readiness sites must achieve NAEYC accreditation within three years of the date when children funded through School Readiness begin attending the program.
 2. School Readiness sites that are Head Start Approved may use this designation to meet this requirement. Accreditation is required of all OEC sites where Smart Start funds are utilized.
 3. Child Day Care current contractor/sub-contractor facilities that serve infants, toddlers or preschoolers must be accredited or hold Head Start Approval; new sub-contractors' facilities must achieve accreditation within a three-year window from the date upon which they first became a sub-contractor.
 4. The three-year accredit by timeline for an already OEC-funded program achieving initial NAEYC or NAFCC accreditation or Head Start Approval is based on the date children first attend the program in the funded spaces awarded to a specific site(s) as recorded by the OEC. The three-year accredit-by date is not extended if:
 - a. The program is awarded additional funding.
 - b. The spaces are moved within the three year time-line to a site that is not accredited.
 5. The OEC-funded early care and education programs that are NAEYC accredited 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.
 - 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.
 6. OEC-funded family child care homes that are NAFCC accredited agree that accreditation is granted to all areas of the home accessible to children.
 7. All programs pursuing NAEYC accreditation or renewal must notify NAEYC of all separate programs that operate within its facility. Such notification must be included in the NAEYC application, candidacy, and renewal
 - a. Smart Start grantees and Child Day Care Contractors must notify the OEC program manager in writing of other classrooms located within their site(s) NOT included in the accreditation.

- b. School Readiness sub-grantees must notify the School Readiness liaisons, who, in turn shall notify the OEC program manager in writing.
- 8. It is the responsibility of the program's administrator to meet NAEYC or NAFCC's requirements regarding the reporting of any programmatic changes including but not limited to:
 - a. New age group is added to an accredited OEC-funded early care and education program, or new or additional funding is awarded to an accredited OEC early care and education funded facility.
 - b. When a program relocates to a new site.
- 9. Application to NAEYC as a satellite location will NOT satisfy the OEC Quality Assurance requirements for NAEYC accreditation. requirement. An OEC-funded early care and education program that has not independently completed 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.
- 10. Kindergarten classrooms in a public school are not required to meet NAEYC accreditation 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.
- 11. OEC-funded early care and education programs agree that the OEC shall have access to:
 - a. Their child care facilities and business offices, if different, during business; and
 - b. Copies of any record requested by the OEC.

III. EXTENSION REQUESTS

- A. Under specific circumstances, programs may submit a one-time extension request to the three-year timeline for achieving initial NAFCC or NAEYC accreditation or Head Start Approval or achieving reaccreditation.
 - 1. The program's administrator must notify the OEC in writing of the need for an extension a minimum of 30 days prior to the accredit-by date or date of expiration.
 - a. The extension request submitted by the program's administrator must include:
 - i. detailed information regarding the rationale for the request including the reasons why the timeline could not be met;
 - ii. specific time-lines addressing the process for current accreditation or Head Start Approval;
 - iii. the proposed extension term;
 - iv. a detailed timeline of efforts made to date to achieve accreditation; and
 - v. why the program should qualify for an extension.

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 obtaining HHS written notification regarding QIP approval; and
 - b. The Interim Quality Assurance Process in which the program must participate.
3. Should OEC quality assurance monitoring of progress toward achieving accreditation or Head Start approval find 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 experiencing revocation of NAEYC or NAFCC accreditation or Head Start approval and programs appealing accreditation denial or HHS letter(s) of termination or denial of refunding are not eligible for an extension.

IV. INTERIM QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

- A. OEC-funded early care and education programs that are not NAEYC or NAFCC accredited or Head Start Approved, as determined by data submitted to the CT Early Childhood Professional Registry, shall participate in the Interim Quality Assurance process.
 1. An annual environmental assessment using early childhood environment rating scale(s) conducted by an OEC approved rater, will be conducted at the program's expense. The program will be required to have an ERS designed for the population(s) served using state funding (infants/toddlers and/or preschoolers).
 2. Child Day Care contractors operating or subcontracting for school-age services must complete an *OEC School Age Continuous Improvement Plan* to be submitted and approved by the OEC. This plan should involve comparing the school-age program against a set of external criteria (e.g., School-Age Environment Rating Scales (SACERS), NIOST resources such as APAS - A Program Assessment System).
 3. Programs that have an approved extension for achieving initial accreditation or reaccreditation must have an ERS by a randomly assigned, OEC approved ERS Rater within the time period specified by OEC, based upon the last ERS or other independent observation of program quality.
 4. The ERS Report must be uploaded to the OEC Registry within three weeks of the ERS observation.

5. The ERS Report shall inform program improvement efforts.
 - a. If a program is enrolled in AQIS, the ERS report should be used to support the AQIS program improvement plan.
 - b. Programs not enrolled in AQIS, should use the ERS Report to create a detailed program improvement plan with the goal of achieving accreditation or Head Start approval.

V. 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 or NAFCC timeline process must:
 1. Within 72 hours of receipt from NAEYC, NAFCC 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. responsible staff,
 - ii. specific dates and timelines, and
 - iii. steps to be taken to achieve accreditation or Head Start approval.
 3. 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.

VI. REMOVAL OF STATE FUNDING

- 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 within 72-hours of receipt of notification from NAEYC, NAFCC or the Office of Head Start.
 1. 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.

2. OEC-funded programs that do not successfully obtain accreditation or Head Start approval within required timelines shall be informed by the OEC Program Manager, the date when enrollment of new children in state-funded spaces must be stopped and will identify the date when access to state funds will cease.
 3. OEC-funded School Readiness program(s)' administrator(s) and the School Readiness Liaison(s) working collaboratively with the School Readiness Council(s) must:
 - a. 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:
 - i. Remain at the program with the family paying the program fee;
 - ii. Connect with 211- Child Care to explore other child care availability; and/or
 - iii. Explore available program options in the community in order to transfer the spaces in a timely fashion.
 4. Work to transfer the spaces to another state-funded program no later than the end of the grant/contract period.
 5. OEC will review and contact options available locally. Upon OEC approval, the transfer of spaces to a selected program(s) will be authorized.
- B. Programs that experience a removal of OEC funding and subsequently achieve NAEYC or NAFCC 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/>