

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

DATE: December 1, 2021 **REVISED December 20, 2021**

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

FROM: Beth Bye, Commissioner

RE: Coronavirus Memo #47 **REVISED**  
FY 22 Waivers of Operating Hours, Days and Alternative Care Plan

Revised December 20, 2021	Addition of Smart Start program eligibility to waiver of hours and/or days.
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The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is offering School Readiness, Child Day Care, and Smart Start Programs the opportunity to seek waivers for hours of operation and/or days of closure in order to respond to the public health emergency and the associated workforce issues. The OEC is also providing School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start Programs a waiver to requirements for funded programs related to alternative care plans.

Programs may choose to reduce hours of operation, or increase days of closure to a maximum of 30 days closed, and will still be considered open to deliver services per funding requirements in [Memo 43](#). Programs may elect to implement remote learning according to [Memo 34](#) and [Remote Learning Guidance for Preschool](#) during days of closure.

Pursuant to Section 19a-79 (d) of the Connecticut General Statutes, when a waiver has been granted by the OEC as outlined below, Section 19a-79-3a (c )(2) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies is waived to the extent that such notifications of planned closures must be made no fewer than 14 days prior to the date of such planned closures.

Applications for waivers must include:

1. Demonstration of need by providing data or summary of public health or workforce issue precipitating need.
2. Plan for parent communication and at least 14 days' notice of changes.
3. No more than 30 days of planned closure for state fiscal year 2022.
  - a. The calculation of planned closure days does not include closing for quarantine /COVID-19 public health reasons as required by local public health officials.
  - b. The calculation of planned closure days includes closures for any state or federal holidays.
  - c. There are no waivers of days of planned closure for school-year only programs.

4. A daily operating schedule of no fewer than 8.5 hours per day for full day programs; or no fewer than 5 hours for school day spaces. There are no waivers of daily operating schedule for part-day or extended-day schedules.
5. Approval of the School Readiness Council, either by Council vote, or if Council has designated authority, by subcommittee or liaison, if the program is funded under School Readiness.
6. Attestation that:
  - a. Programs must follow their own operating policies and [OEC General Policies](#) in regard to changes and closings.
  - b. If a waiver is granted, licensed programs will report changes to the OEC Licensing Division and reflect changes in the [Early Childhood Professional Registry](#) Program Profile for each site.
  - c. Family needs have been identified and the changes requested will not limit families' access to the services requested.
  - d. A regular (not less than quarterly) assessment of family schedule needs will be conducted to ensure program operating hours / days meet family needs. Results of assessments shall be documented and made available to the School Readiness Liaison if applicable and the OEC upon request.
  - e. If a waiver is granted to reduce the number of days child care is provided, full-time staff compensation shall not be decreased based on such reduced schedule and the additional days the program is closed must be considered paid time-off.

For State Fiscal Year 2022, this memo also waives requirements related to alternative care plans for families to access when their program is closed. This supports the **OEC 's strong recommendation that providers continue their efforts to implement public health policies and procedures consistent with Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations.**

Programs must submit requests for changes to operating hours or days of closure to their Program Managers on the *FY 22 Waiver Application for Operating Schedule or Days of Closure Variance*. Waivers are granted at the discretion of the Commissioner of the OEC and are temporary.

For existing waivers approved through December 31, 2021, providers will need to submit a new application and provide written evidence of the program's efforts to recruit staff and assurance that family's needs are met. Applications should be submitted to the appropriate Program Managers.

While we understand the current operating challenges programs are experiencing, it is our intention that programs will actively make an effort to return to full operating schedule, as all waivers are intended to be temporary.

Questions pertaining to this memo should be directed to OEC Program Managers.