FOR CONNECTICUT

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

action plan

OEC

WWW.CT.GOV/OEC

inputs

USING A RANGE OF CHANNELS, EARLY CARE & EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS PROVIDED VALUABLE INPUT.

1700 families surveyed

Over **400 community & provider** meetings since OEC's creation

Survey distributed to **all providers** in the state

6 facilitated action sessions

Advised and reviewed by **national experts** from CLASP

100+ early childhood reports and plans reviewed

Over **200 individual comments** incorporated

Analysis of **current research** and data

"What a great program for children and families"
– Grandparent

"C4K is so important to many in our state"
– Provider

action areas

ACTION AREA 1	**LICENSING REQUIREMENTS AND ENFORCEMENT**	Improve implementation of licensing program & increase support to providers to assure safest child care settings. Creates consistent, high quality child care for Connecticut families.
ACTION AREA 2	**ACCESS AND RATES**	Increase access & equity—by balancing investments to more fully develop infant/toddler care, creating a coordinated statewide preschool system & including all ethnicities, income levels, and needs.
ACTION AREA 3	**WORKFORCE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND TRAINING**	Increase child care rates and simplify complex requirements, so providers can deliver high quality care for Connecticut families.
ACTION AREA 4	**COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION, AND COLLABORATION**	Create channels for families to get information and provide feedback to the OEC. Increase interaction and collaboration to develop the best programs for CT families.

licensing requirements and enforcement

ACTION AREA 1 IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGE

IDENTIFIED PAIN POINTS

> Licensing regulations out of date.

> Licensing specialists do not always offer compliance feedback in a supportive way.

> Families are using unsafe care and infants are at a higher risk of harm.

SUPPORTING FACTS

> Duplicate ways of monitoring may occur in silos.

> "OEC licensing specialists are not consistent in their feedback regarding compliance" was #4 of 10 issue areas by providers surveyed (2-1-1 Child Care).

> Since March 2016, there have been six recorded infant and toddler deaths in unlicensed child care settings.

licensing requirements and enforcement

ACTION AREA 1

ACTION AREA 1 TAKING ACTION...

HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE

IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION OF LICENSING PROGRAM AND INCREASE SUPPORT TO PROVIDERS TO ACHIEVE COMPLIANCE.

PLANNED ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS
Revise licensing regulations & statutes to improve clarity and support high quality	● Gather final suggestions on changes to licensing regulations. Draft final proposed regulations and launch formal regulatory revision process. ◆ Amend State Law to allow Family Child Care Providers to care for additional children during summer months (Passed 18-172, Section 4).
Improve licensing practices with a focus on enhancing support to providers to achieve compliance	● Co-convene a workgroup with Office of Child Advocate to improve OEC's approach to inspection. Goals of workgroup are: maximize safety, increase support to achieve compliance, increase consistency, and minimize burden. (Focus on communications, training, differential monitoring, complaint process, loans or grants for compliance, logistics). ● Launch online licensure renewals.
Reduce use of unsafe care for infants	● Launch child safety campaign to reduce infant deaths by increasing use of safe, legal care. ● Enact "no more blankets" policy and distribute sleep sacks. ● Launch outreach campaign to increase enrollment of infants & toddlers in Care4Kids.

● *Planned*
◆ *Legislative Solution*
Underway
✔ *Complete*

ACTION AREA 1 LICENSING REQUIREMENTS AND ENFORCEMENT

access and rates

ACTION AREA 2

ACTION AREA 2 IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGE

IDENTIFIED PAIN POINTS

> There is not enough funding to provide affordable infant and toddler care in the state.

> State funding for preschools results in uneven access among families.

> Some families (children with special needs, teen parents, shift workers, etc) are not getting the support they need.

SUPPORTING FACTS

> 80% of brain development happens in the first three years and the conditions in which that happen matter greatly.

> 10-year low in Care4Kids enrollment, disproportionately impacts infant & toddler care.

> There is a 31,000 infant/toddler space shortage of financial assistance for families to help pay for infant/toddler care (80% cannot afford care).

> Only 6% of black families and Hispanic families can afford infant/toddler care without financial assistance.*

> 40% providers reported funding was a major barrier to enrolling children who are living in poverty, homeless, involved with Department of Children and Families survivors of domestic abuse, have developmental delays, or are children of teen parents.

> There are 100 to 400 preschoolers in families who cannot afford childcare and do not have financial support.

*And stay within recommended 10% of income

ACTION AREA 2 ACCESS AND RATES

access and rates

ACTION AREA 2

ACTION AREA 2 TAKING ACTION...

HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE

BALANCE INVESTMENTS BETWEEN INFANT AND TODDLER AND PRESCHOOL CARE TO BUILD FOUNDATION FOR 0-5 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

PLANNED ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS
Implement a steady, responsible approach to transform the funding system to maximize impact, infant/toddler support, and provider stability	● Plan for increased investment in infant and toddler care across the system by making adjustments to existing policies. (Underway) ● Support infrastructure development funding to help the field increase infant/toddler capacity. (Underway) ● Increase coordination between early care and education system and OEC's infant/toddler supports such as the Birth to Three, Child Development Infoline, and Home Visiting systems. (Underway)
Take the first steps to support and enable providers to enroll and serve infants and toddlers (where funds and practicality allow)	● Increase Care4Kids infant and toddler rates for center-based child care to the extent possible. (Underway) ● Make modifications to the next round of early care and education Request for Proposals, contracts, grants, and federal award applications (such as Child Care Development Fund and Community Based Child Abuse Prevention) to increase slots, rates, supports, and incentives for infants and toddlers. (Underway) ◆ Amend State Law to help providers serve infants and toddlers (such as changing waitlist rules to ensure infants and toddlers are not disproportionately harmed when there is a Care4Kids waitlist) (PA 18-184 Sec 1 and 3). (Underway) ● Strengthen family child care by launching shared services networks reducing administrative costs and increasing stability. (Complete) ● Incentivize creation of more infant/toddler licensed care. (Complete)

● *Planned*
◆ *Legislative Solution*
Underway
✔ *Complete*

ACTION AREA 2 ACCESS AND RATES

access and rates

ACTION AREA 2

ACTION AREA 2 TAKING ACTION...

HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE

CREATE A COORDINATED STATEWIDE PRESCHOOL SYSTEM

PLANNED ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS
Better align and distribute preschool funding, administration, and policies across multiple provider types and funding streams	◆ Work with legislators to build needed structural changes into early care and education legislation to enable the development of a coordinated system. (Multiple laws, 2018). ✔
	● Embed practical policy changes and incentives in the next round of early care and education Request for Proposals, contracts, grants, and federal award applications (such as Child Care Development Fund and Community Based Child Abuse Prevention) to create a more coordinated preschool system for Connecticut (for example, by modifying Request for Proposals criteria, increasing access to information, aligning rates and incentives, incorporating best practices from the PDG grant) (agency level changes and PA 18-184 Sec 2 and 8). ⊙
	● Convene workgroup to assess and improve family experience applying for and using Care4Kids. ✔

● *Planned*
◆ *Legislative Solution*
⊙ *Underway*
✔ *Complete*

ACTION AREA 2 ACCESS AND RATES

access and rates

ACTION AREA 2

ACTION AREA 2 TAKING ACTION...

HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE

ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF ALL FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN, INCLUDING THOSE WITH DISTINCT NEEDS

PLANNED ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS
Reduce the barriers to care for children with disabilities or special education needs	● Assess and address the exclusion of children with developmental delays, disabilities, and children with special healthcare needs from child care for example: ■ Produce clear guidance on rights of parents. ■ Support providers to comply through program rate and eligibility changes, infrastructure grants, and training or consultation support. ■ Pilot better ways to surface developmental delays and channel families to appropriate supports. ✓ ■ Review and modify (B06) School readiness policy to allow children to attend special education hours at public schools without penalty. ✓
Monitor and address disparities in access and outcomes	● Communicate the value of early care and education investments, particularly economic impacts, for all children. ● Take action to increase equity in access and outcomes for families (for example conduct routine surveys of Birth to Three community on barriers to access, monitor preschool suspension and exclusion, assess statewide efforts to prevent and address trauma, increase providers' equity in access to training and funding, etc). ✓

● *Planned*
◆ *Legislative Solution*
✓ *Underway*
✔ *Complete*

ACTION AREA 2 ACCESS AND RATES

access and rates

ACTION AREA 2

ACTION AREA 2 TAKING ACTION...

HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE

ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF ALL FAMILIES WITH STATE FUNDING AND POLICIES

IDENTIFIED PAIN POINTS

> Some families (children with special needs, teen parents, shift workers, etc.) are not getting the support they need.

PLANNED ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS
Enhance the capacity of the early care and education system to serve families with additional stressors	● Establish partnerships with peer agencies to connect the early care and education to statewide resources to prevent and respond to trauma (such as home visiting and maternal depression supports; supporting providers to help children with behavioral concerns, ECE-based screening, referral and support; homeless diversion; supports to incarcerated parents and substance using parents, and others). ✔
	◆ Embed language in early care and education grants, contracts, applications, policies, and regulations to incentivize the enrollment of families with additional stressors (for example, rewarding multilingual providers in RFP points, introduce additional bonus payments, modify eligibility rules, incentivize community partnerships, and invest in proactive outreach) (5449 Sec 2, 3, 8, and 9).
	● Provide training and resources accessible and translated for all providers to best serve children and families, especially those with additional stressors and in family child care.
	◆ Remove barriers to enrolling in child care for children experiencing homelessness (5169 Sec 1 and 2).

● *Planned*
◆ *Legislative Solution*
Underway
✔ *Complete*

ACTION AREA 2 ACCESS AND RATES

ACTION AREA
3

workforce, technical assistance, and training

ACTION AREA 3 IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGE

IDENTIFIED PAIN POINTS

> Child care rates are inadequate to cover the full cost of high quality care for children ages 0-5, especially workforce costs.

> It is too hard for providers to comply with workforce qualification requirements and program funding requirements.

SUPPORTING FACTS

> The average operating cost to run a preschool classroom in a center is $328,000, of which 77% is driven by workforce costs.

> It costs approximately $24,409 per child per year to provide quality infant/toddler care in a center.

> It costs approximately $18,910 per child per year to provide quality preschool care in a center.

> "Wages are too low to attract and retain highly qualified staff" was ranked #3 out of 10 issue areas by providers surveyed (2-1-1 Child Care).

> There are 15 steps in the career ladder and different staff requirements for School Readiness, Quality Recognition Improvement System, Care4Kids, etc.

ACTION AREA
3

workforce, technical assistance, and training

ACTION AREA 3 TAKING ACTION...

HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE

INCREASE CHILD CARE RATES TO ENSURE PROVIDERS CAN AFFORD TO DELIVER HIGH QUALITY CARE

PLANNED ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS
Make responsible, modest increases to School Readiness, Child Day Care, Early Head Start and Head Start State Supplement, etc. to replicate best practices from Preschool Development Grant and support quality where fiscally possible	◆ Amend State Law to allow the OEC to raise School Readiness rates (PA 18-184 Sec 8). ✔ ● Communicate with stakeholders and public about connection between rates, wages, access, and quality and comparisons to public elementary school costs. ⊙ ● Release rates analysis for child care spaces and propose long term increase plan. ⊙
Increase Care4Kids rates towards meeting federal benchmark of 75th percentile of market rates for all settings	● After infant/toddler Care4Kids rate increases, finalize long term Care4Kids rate increase plan for other age groups.

● *Planned*
◆ *Legislative Solution*
⊙ *Underway*
✔ *Complete*

ACTION AREA 3 WORKFORCE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, & TRAINING

ACTION AREA 3

workforce, technical assistance, and training

ACTION AREA 3 TAKING ACTION...

HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE

SIMPLIFY AND REDUCE DUPLICATIVE OR INEFFECTIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVIDERS

PLANNED ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS
Improve data systems and reduce redundancies in data collection	● Give programs access to information about the status of criminal justice background checks through a new data system.
	● Assess and improve existing data systems (registry, Early Childhood Information System, online coursework system, Care4Kids, etc).
Simplify the workforce requirements and reduce reporting burdens	● Convene workgroup to assess reporting requirements to identify near-term and long-term opportunities to streamline, simplify, and reduce redundancy (for examples, improvements to the registry, waivers for lab schools, Childcare Development Fund training requirements, Bachelor's degree requirements, etc).
	● Complete QRIS pilot and revise the system based on provider feedback. Complete alignment with licensing, Care4Kids, School Readiness, Child Day Care, Head Start, National Association for Family Childcare, and National Association for the Education of Young Children requirements.
	◆ Amend State Law to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden on providers (PA 18-172 Sec 3, 6, and 7).
	◆ Amend State Law to assess work force requirements (PA 18-123). Next step: Convene workgroup.

● *Planned*
◆ *Legislative Solution*
Underway
✔ *Complete*

ACTION AREA 3 WORKFORCE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, & TRAINING

communication, information, and collaboration

ACTION AREA 4 IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGE

IDENTIFIED PAIN POINTS

> Family voice is not driving decisions.

> There is a need for continuous feedback loops between OEC and providers, advocates, and other stakeholders.

SUPPORTING FACTS

> There is a lack of infrastructure for OEC to routinely solicit feedback from parents on policy decisions.

> The OEC's website is difficult to navigate.

ACTION AREA 4

communication, information, and collaboration

ACTION AREA 4 TAKING ACTION...

HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE

BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DIRECT RELATIONSHIPS WITH AND CHANNELS FOR FAMILIES TO GET THE INFORMATION THEY NEED AND PROVIDE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK TO THE SYSTEM

PLANNED ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS
Create better resources to communicate with families on program availability, safety and quality, and eligibility requirements	• Implement feedback loops with parents (through better communications, family surveys, community meetings, webinars, community liaisons, Childcare 211, Quality Recognition Improvement System ratings, etc). ✓ • Conduct family survey on impact of Care4Kids closure/waitlist. ✔ • Rebuild OEC website to be more user friendly. ✓ • Create OEC Parent Cabinet to advise OEC on agency decisions and policies. ✓
Ensure racially and culturally diverse representation from communities, families, and providers in discussions around early care and education policies through intentional outreach and inclusion	• Ensure new family voice action items (above) are acted on with racial equity lens. ✓ • Develop new community-level partnerships with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse organizations. ✓ • Conduct racial equity impact assessments on proposed policies. ✓

- ● *Planned*
- ◆ *Legislative Solution*
- ✓ *Underway*
- ✔ *Complete*

ACTION AREA 4 COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION, AND COLLABORATION

communication, information, and collaboration

ACTION AREA 4

ACTION AREA 4 TAKING ACTION...

HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE

BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE FOR TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATIONS THAT LEAD TO COLLABORATIVE DIRECTION SETTING

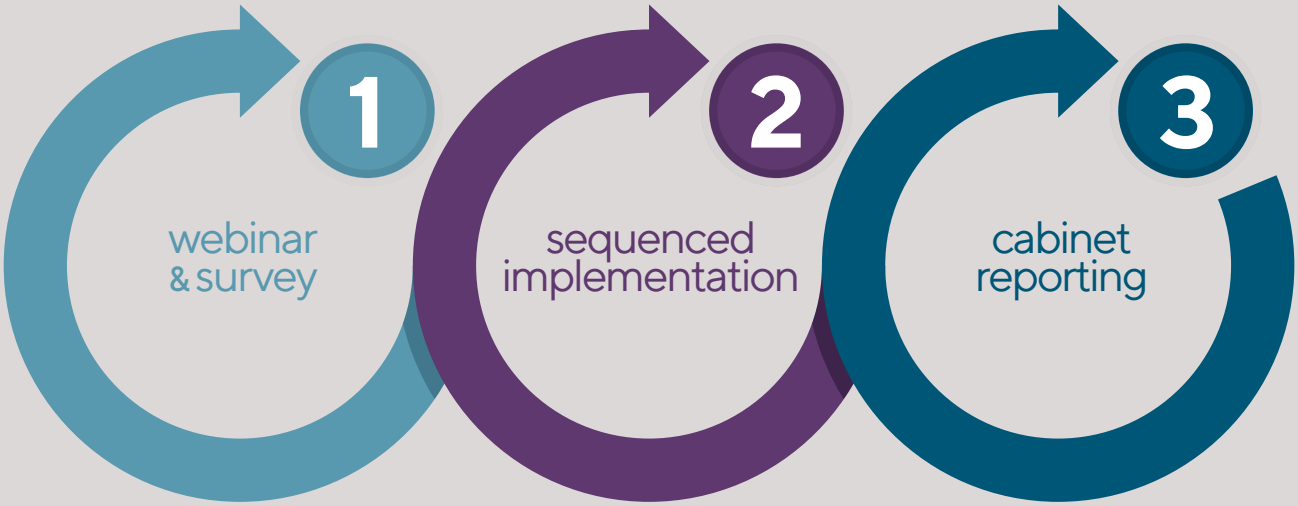
PLANNED ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS
Empower stakeholders with compelling information about the impact of early care and education programs and the value of early childhood investments to better tell their story	• Define shared, meaningful family outcomes that are based on goals of OEC, providers, advocates, families, and other stakeholders. (Underway) • Translate the outcomes into measurable metrics that can be tied to existing administrative datasets and shared publicly. (Underway) • Communicate the progress early care and education providers are making towards the achievement of family outcomes, reinforcing the value of early childhood investments.
Continuously seek feedback on how OEC is doing and what we can do to improve	• Deliver progress report on proposed actions at every Early Childhood Cabinet meeting and hold complementary webinar for broader reach. (Complete) • Build public report card on progress of Action Plan. (Complete) • Share sequence and planned timing of planned actions. • Hold transparent process on workgroup formation. (Underway) • Implement feedback loops with providers (through better communications, surveys, community meetings, webinars, community liaisons, etc). (Underway)

- ● *Planned*
- ◆ *Legislative Solution*
- *Underway*
- ✔ *Complete*

ACTION AREA 4 COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION, AND COLLABORATION

next steps

THE OEC WILL MOVE FORWARD IN THE FOLLOWING WAY



OEC

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

FOR MORE INFORMATION
VISIT WWW.CT.GOV/OEC/ACTION