

Colchester School Readiness Council

Policies for Programs Receiving School Readiness Funds

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A. Quality Assurance Requirements

To meet Quality Assurance requirements, providers must submit to the School Readiness Council (SRC) evidence that they meet the accreditation standard as outlined in Office of Early Childhood General Policy B-05.

I. Policy

A. 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. School Readiness sites that are Head Start Approved may use this designation to meet this requirement.
2. School Readiness providers 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.
 - 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. 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.
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, their compliance with Quality Assurance Measures including, but not limited to, NAEYC Accreditation or Head Start Approval, as follows:

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- 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, 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:

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- i. detailed information regarding the rationale for the request;
 - ii. specific time-lines addressing the process for current Accreditation or Head Start 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.

II. 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.

III. 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.

IV. 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 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.

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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 the above see General Policy B-05.

Any significant changes in the program, such as staff or program location, that may impact NAEYC accreditation or approval, must be reported to the School Readiness Liaison in writing within a week of knowledge of the change.

B. Eligibility

1. To be eligible for the School Readiness Program, families must reside in Colchester. Proof of residency is required for enrollment. The School Readiness Council determined not to implement the non-residency option as there is no history of under-utilization of spaces.
2. The School Readiness Program serves children living in Colchester who are 3 and 4 years old, as well as children who are age 5 who are exempt from enrollment in school. A local school readiness council may elect to reserve up to five per cent of the spaces in its school readiness programs for children who are five years of age and are eligible to attend school pursuant to section 10-15c. Such children shall only be eligible to participate in the school readiness program if they have been in the program for at least one year and the parent or legal guardian of such a child, the school readiness program provider and the local regional or school district in which the child would otherwise be attending school agree that the child can be best served by remaining in the School Readiness Program. In this case, the parent must sign the public school option form exempting his/her child from attendance at the public school.
3. By School Readiness requirement, 60% of enrolled School Readiness families must fall below 75% of the State median income. There are no requirements regarding work status.
4. Eligibility determinations are the responsibility of the School Readiness Liaison and/or other individuals designated by the School Readiness Council. Individual School Readiness Program Providers are not permitted to deny or otherwise refuse admission to a child who has otherwise been determined eligible by the SRC.

C. Enrollment and Admissions

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1. Enrollment decisions are based upon income eligibility and other family conditions according to the School Readiness Admission Rubric. Families are contacted in order of need based upon rubric score.
2. Families are given one week to fully enroll their child into a designated program from the date the School Readiness Liaison notified the family of their child's eligibility to occupy a School Readiness funded space. Fully enrolled is defined as completion of all the registration materials required by the SRC sub-grantee in addition to registration materials required by the School Readiness Liaison. If the family fails to fully enroll their child within one week, the School Readiness Liaison will select the next eligible child to occupy the space. Children who are fully enrolled must begin attending the program within two weeks of the family's first notification by the School Readiness Liaison that their child is eligible to occupy a School Readiness funded space.
3. When the available spaces in the program are exceeded, an applicant pool is compiled. Applicants for the same space will be selected based on greater need.
4. Admissions decisions are made without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion or disability.
5. Publicity and recruitment for the program is done through means such as:
 - a. Contact with the Town Department of Youth and Social Services
 - b. Coordination with Colchester Head Start program
 - c. Contact with families who are currently on the waiting list for the Colchester Early Childhood Program.
 - d. Publicity at monthly early childhood screenings.
 - e. Announcements on Town and School Websites and through email distribution lists
 - f. Advertisement in the local paper.
 - g. Brochure/Flyer placed in key locations in town that might serve families with low income.

D. Attendance

1. Full-day/full-year programs must provide early care and education services for children 10 hours per day, 5 days per week, for 50 weeks per year. Children must be consistently in need of services for a minimum of 6 hours per day, 5 days per week for 50 weeks of the year.
2. School-Day/School-Year Programs must provide early care and education services for six hours per day, five days per week for 180 days. Children must be consistently in need of services for a minimum of five hours per day, five days per week for 180 days.

3. Part-Day/Part-Year programs must provide early care and education services for 2 1/2 hours per day, five days per week for a minimum of 180 days per year.
4. Records including an attendance log and sign-in/sign-out sheets, must be kept and made available for monitoring and auditing purposes. The attendance log must be completed and available to the School Readiness Liaison by the 5th day of the following month.
5. The attendance policy is as follows:
Arriving on time and attending every day is important for a child's success and learning. Missing just 10% of school (one or two days every few weeks) can make it harder for a child to get ready for kindergarten and can develop poor attendance habits that are difficult to break. The routine of attending preschool daily will help a child adjust and learn more easily. It is the responsibility of each funded Provider to make concerted efforts to ensure School Readiness slots are fully utilized by families. Programs should follow the established protocol below in order to maximize attendance and to assure children receive the benefits the program has to offer.

Attendance Protocol- The School Readiness program requires regular attendance. A parent/guardian must contact the program whenever a child will be absent from school. If a child becomes chronically absent or has interrupted attendance, unrelated to illness, defined as:

- Two consecutive months of four or more absences each month or
- More than two weeks of no attendance in the same month
- Late arrival to or early pick-up from school greater than 1 hour for school-day programs or 15 min for part-day more than 4 times per month.

the child's teacher or program director will review the attendance policy with a family member. The program should document the date, time, content of the conversation, and who was present.

If the attendance issue continues, the program must arrange a family meeting with the Early Childhood Coordinator and the program director. The attendance policy will again be reviewed and possible strategies and supports will be discussed. The program should document the date, time, content of the conversation, and who was present.

If a parent does not attend the meeting(s), is not willing to follow the attendance policy, or the child stops attending completely; the child may be withdrawn due to failure to comply with the attendance policy. The decision to withdraw a child will be made jointly between the program and the Early Childhood Coordinator. Once the space is deemed "vacant", the Early Childhood Coordinator will enroll a new student in the slot.

E. Fee and Subsidies

1. All program types shall charge fees.
2. Part-Day programs are not required to charge fees and, at the discretion of the SRC, the requirement may be waived.
3. Parent fees for School Readiness spaces will be based on the Income Guidelines for School Readiness Grant Funded Programs and Fee Schedules.
 - a. Proof of income is required for all families.
 - b. The previous year's tax return, or if the return does not accurately reflect the current financial situation at least two recent pay stubs, will be used to determine family income and must re-determine family income annually.
 - c. No family, regardless of the number of children participating in a School Readiness program, shall be charged more than the calculated per child fee.
 - d. Providers shall annually publish their cost of care for School Readiness supported spaces and shall file their published rate with the SRC.
 - e. The School Readiness Liaison need not determine family income and family size when a family agrees to pay the entire cost of care.
 - f. All fees received by providers from families shall be used to support the School Readiness program in the fiscal year they are collected. Fees from May and June can be used in the next fiscal year. Requests to carry over additional family fees must be approved by the local SRC and in turn the SRC must seek the permission of the OEC.
 - g. Ensure that sub-grantees set up a separate non-interest bearing account to hold family fees collected by the School Readiness program.
 - h. Programs shall encourage and assist families to apply to the C4K Program but shall not make it a condition for enrollment.
 - i. Family fee determination made by C4K shall be the family fee for any OEC-funded early care and education space.
 - j. All OEC-funded early care and education programs shall establish written fee policies and disseminate these policies to families and staff, at least in their respective handbooks. For School Readiness, such policies shall be based on the School Readiness Councils' (SRCs') policy. At a minimum, these policies shall address:

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- How family contribution is determined;
 - How per-child fees are assessed and collected;
 - How income, family size, TFA status and any other eligibility factors are determined and verified;
 - How confidentiality of family information is maintained; and
 - How a family hardship will be considered, including outlining procedures not limited to: fee determination and waiver, failure to pay, process for the temporary reduction in assessed fees, timeline applied, and the process for appealing a fee determination. Any reduction in the amount collected should be documented as fee waived.
4. When the OEC publishes/updates the fee schedule, changes to individual fees charged shall become effective thirty (30) days after the date families are notified or at the family's next income determination, whichever is later.
 5. Programs shall notify parents of any upcoming change 30 days prior to the date the change is to take place and maintain proof of such notification.
 6. Each School Readiness Program must provide an expenditure report to the SRC at least twice annually on grant award, family fees, and Care 4 Kids revenue in a manner determined by the SRC.

F. Local School Readiness Budget Guidance

1. Programs may use their allotted School Readiness funds in the budget line items that support the costs of their School Readiness program.
2. The School Readiness Council (SRC) must consider and approve the proposed budget in relationship to the quality of the program provided as they review and approve applications during the grant review process.
3. Any budget revisions by the sub-grantee should be submitted for approval to the SRC.
4. In some communities SRCs, grantees, or programs may recommend collaboration in the provision of common services. Grantees may not require that programs purchase services from the grantee or any specific vendor. This collaboration must be entered into voluntarily.
 - a. Programs may choose to collaborate with the grantee or other programs to purchase common services such as administration, management, program or professional development and evaluation with direct service dollars.

- b. If it is determined that a grantee will contract for a common service or provide the service themselves and expect payment from sub-grantee(s), then each sub-grantee must make payment to the grantee directly for such services.
 - c. Grantees may not withhold a portion of a program's allocation for payment to itself or to a provider, for common services.
- 6. Grantees may require programs to budget for and take corrective action or implement a plan for program improvement as a condition of their grant award or when a program deficiency is identified. Grantees must approve the plan of corrective action but may not require programs to purchase services from the grantee or to use a prescribed vendor that is contracted and or managed by the grantee.

G. Alternative Care Plan

1. A full day/full year program that operates for 50 weeks or closes for days other than traditional holidays must have a written Alternative Care Plan that guarantees full-day service for all families requesting it during a closure.
2. The Council must annually approve each Alternative Care Plan to ensure that families and children in that program are supported in accessing childcare. Plans should include:
 - a. How parents are informed of the Alternative Care Policy when they enroll including the alternative care programs that they can access;
 - b. A calendar of closures
 - c. Parents given at least a two-week prior written notice of the closing;
 - d. Parents to sign a form to be kept in the child's file indicating a need for alternative care;
 - e. A plan for reimbursement for alternative care arrangements.
3. Alternate Care can be provided through cooperative arrangements with other early childhood programs in the community, within their own programs, or the program can provide payments to parents for weeks when care is not provided.
4. Copies of the child's health record and emergency contact information will be sent to the alternate-care provider upon written request of the parents, should an alternate care plan be in place.

H. Spaces for Children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), special health care or other disabilities

1. School Readiness classrooms are required to be general education programs and should strive to enroll a natural proportion of children with disabilities. Natural proportions should be determined by the town's K-12 special education percentage.
2. SR Programs must treat children with and without IEPs, those with special health care needs and identified disabilities equally with regard to enrollment. No child should be excluded from a SR Program solely as a result of his or special education status, health care need or disability.
3. A child enrolled in a SR Program receiving special education services as determined by a planning and placement team shall be considered to be receiving supplemental and NOT supplanted funding when combining these two funding streams.
4. A collaborative agreement with the LEA to provide services within School Readiness classrooms must be developed unless a PPT has determined that the services will not benefit the child unless they are in a separate location. All children with an IEP must be provided with a program that ensures continuity and consistency in the least restrictive environment. The parent(s), the School Readiness Program, and the LEA will collaborate to plan a program best suited to meet the goals in the IEP in the least restrictive environment.
5. If the delivery of special education services is at a location other than the School Readiness program a specific process for ongoing communication between the two programs should be coordinated to ensure consistency of services in the least restrictive environment. **Parental consent must be obtained to allow two-way communication between the program and the LEA.** All children with an IEP who are receiving special education and related services are entitled to all the School Readiness services as defined by the School Readiness legislation regardless of the space type.
6. All children with an IEP who are receiving special education and related services and are participating in any type of School Readiness space (Full Day/Full Year, Part Day/Part Year) will be entitled to all the School Readiness services as defined by the School Readiness legislation regardless of the space type. Adaptations and accommodations must be provided to meet individual children's special needs, in accordance with applicable policies and state and federal law.
7. A child enrolled in SR must be physically located at the program site for the total number of hours required by their specific space type. Time for services in a location other than the SR program are not reimbursable for any slot type. Children on an IEP are eligible for all types of SR spaces that encompass the amount of hours spent at the School Readiness location.

8. The School Readiness Liaison may assist in determining the appropriate School Readiness space-type for a child with an IEP according to Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program General Policy B-04.

I. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

1. The Colchester School Readiness Program recognizes a responsibility to prohibit discrimination in policies and practices regarding its personnel, students, parents and members of the public who participate in school sponsored programs.
2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") is an Act that prohibits discrimination against persons with a disability in any program receiving Federal financial assistance. Section 504 defines a person with a disability as anyone who:
 - a. has a mental physical impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities (major life activities such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing hearing, speaking breathing, learning and working);
 - b. has a record or such an impairment; or
 - c. is regarded as having such an impairment
3. No discrimination against any person with a disability will knowingly be permitted in any of the programs and practices in the school system. Persons who feel that they may have been discriminated against on the basis of disability should contact the Colchester Public School's Section 504 Coordinator, at (860-537-3103).
4. The school district also has specific responsibilities under the Section 504 with respect to providing access to appropriate educational services for students who qualify under Section 504. These responsibilities include the obligation to identify, to evaluate, and to afford access to appropriate educational services. If the parent or guardian disagrees with the decisions made by the professional staff of the school district with respect to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of their child, he/she has a right to an impartial hearing.

J. Staff Qualifications Policy

1. Programs must meet Connecticut legislative requirements for staff education qualifications. The percentage of designated Qualified Staff Member (QSM) distribution described in the QSM Qualifying Options table (p. 2) of GP A-01 applies to the entire program. This includes ALL classrooms serving any combination of infants, toddlers or preschoolers, regardless of classroom funding.
2. The QSM is designated for each classroom from the individuals who meet both the definition of Teacher and QSM eligibility requirements, and is assigned to the classroom by

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a program staffer with administrative access in the Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Registry, <http://www.ccacregistry.org/>

3. All School Readiness programs must designate the Qualified Staff Members in the Professional Registry for all classrooms, including those with no School Readiness spaces. (The QSM is the individual designated in the Professional Registry by the program administrator as having primary responsibility for a classroom of children, most commonly called the “Teacher”).
4. Part-time and full-time teaching and administrative staff members of state-funded programs are required to hold Registry accounts with current transcripts, diplomas, teaching / administrative endorsements and credentials on file; other staff members may participate in the Registry.
5. All programs must maintain a schedule in classrooms where children receive SR funds, for a “teacher” to be present as described for each space type:
 - a. To be present for at least six hours of the Full-Day space type;
 - b. For all hours of the School-Day space type and Part-Day space types classrooms;
 - c. Every School Readiness program is required to have a staff member present, who has at least a CDA, Associate's degree, or Bachelor's degree during all hours of operation.
6. Programs must notify the School Readiness Liaison of staff changes immediately and provide updated staff credential and staffing patterns pages from the grant application, as well as a copy of the credentials of any new staff.
7. There must be someone on site at all times with a current pediatric CPR, medication administration and first aid certificate.

K. Professional Development Plan and Experiences

1. Professional Development is considered to be an experience of sufficient duration (at least 2 hours) provided by a person with expertise, knowledge, and training in the subject matter.
2. All staff members must have a written individual professional development plan outlining professional goals that increase their knowledge and expertise in early childhood practice.
3. Each staff member participates in early literacy skill development training, and cultural and linguistic diversity training for early childhood classrooms within their first year of employment.

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4. Each staff member engages in 15 hours of professional development experiences each year that increases their awareness, knowledge, and practice of recognition and response to children's needs (i.e. planning, observing, adaptive strategies, use of screening and assessment, special education strategies, general child development, trauma informed practice, etc.)
5. Statements regarding the impact of professional development on program quality must be included in the program's Family Handbook.
6. School Readiness programs must document the training of each staff member.

L. Provider Contracts and Terminations

1. Any child care provider contracting with the Colchester Public Schools in association with the School Readiness Program must adhere to all School Readiness policies.
2. All Providers must agree to visits made by the School Readiness liaison or the School Readiness Monitor for the purpose of fiscal and programmatic monitoring.
3. Any child care provider not following the Colchester Public Schools School Readiness policies will have up to 45 days in which to institute corrective action. If the situation is not corrected at the end of the 30 days the contract between the childcare provider and Colchester School Readiness will be terminated 30 days from the end of the first 45 days.

M. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Programs

1. All School Readiness programs must participate in any evaluation process designated by the Office of Early Childhood.
2. The CT ELDS and an appropriate assessment aligned to the CT ELDS are used for planning learning experiences, observing and documenting child progress, and implementing teaching strategies. All curriculum used must align with the CT ELDS.
3. Staff, parents and others collect information on quality from sources, and engage in a reflective process to assess the effectiveness of the program as measured by accreditation/approval entities, OEC evaluation measures and program measures.
4. Programs must document their curriculum, assessment and reflective processes, monitor their progress and report to families and the School Readiness Council annually.

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5. Actions plans, if required, will be developed and implemented within a six month period of time.

N. Parent Involvement, Parent Education, and Outreachs

1. Family Handbook must contain information on the program's parent involvement efforts including:
 - a. Parent advisory council including the decision making policy.
 - b. Home/school partnership initiatives designed to develop reciprocal communication and engagement.
 - c. Opportunities for parent education and other support activities.

O. Confidentiality

The School Readiness staff will not disclose confidential and/or personally identifiable information about any student or family in the absence of written consent or as otherwise permitted or required by law. In accordance with state and federal law, the Colchester Board of Education has adopted policies regarding the confidentiality of records and the circumstances under which disclosure of student information is permitted. Copies of these policies are available from the School Readiness Liaison and apply to the School Readiness staff.

P. Referrals for Health Services, Including Referrals for Appropriate Immunizations and Screenings

1. Programs will use the ED 191 form for health records
2. Child health files will include health screens pursuant to *Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT)*.
3. Programs will have a tracking system for health record expiration and accuracy.
4. Family Handbooks will provide information on vision, hearing and dental screenings either onsite or provided in collaboration with another agency.
5. Family Handbooks will provide information on processes to assist families to secure medical insurance, a medical home, on-going well-child care, immunizations, and health, dental, and nutritional screenings.

Q. Council Meeting Announcements

1. In October of each year, the Colchester School Readiness Council will publish the dates of all upcoming meetings on the Collaborative for Colchester's website.

Approved 11.5.2020

2. The minutes of each meeting will be distributed to each Council Member for dissemination to their respective organization. Minutes will be available at the School Readiness office site and/or on the Collaborative for Colchester's website.

R. Expulsion Policy

No child can be expelled from a program with the exception of non-payment and non-attendance as defined by Sections D and E above or when determined by the School Readiness Council Chair, Co-Chairs, and School Readiness Liaison to be a safety risk to self or others.

The following procedures MUST take place and be documented before any child can be recommended for expulsion:

1. **The program will notify the School Readiness Liaison as soon as possible of any situation in which there is the potential for expulsion.**
2. Parent notification of concerns;
3. Teacher consultation with other teachers;
4. Teacher implementation of alternative strategies;
5. Parent meeting to discuss strategies to develop and implement home plan;
6. Program refers parents/guardians to Colchester Public Schools for Preschool Screening and/or consultation.

For School Readiness students attending the Colchester Early Childhood Program, the District expulsion policy must be followed.

S. Non-Sectarian Policy

A School Readiness program must be a "non-sectarian program" which is defined in Connecticut General Statute section 10-16p. Programs should be guided by the following rules:

1. The program must be open to all children, and cannot exclude a child based on the family's religious creed or lack thereof.
2. The program cannot attempt to persuade or convert children or their families to religion or a particular religious persuasion.
3. The program will not implement religious observances, such as prayer, grace, confession, church attendance, or religious instruction, etc.
4. The program must accommodate the practice of a child or staff member's personal religious beliefs where the practice is required during program hours (e.g., Islamic designated time for prayers).
5. The program may not require children or their families enrolled in the School Readiness program to participate in faith-based or church sponsored activities or services.
6. Programs may not discriminate in hiring based on religious affiliation or lack of religious affiliation.

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7. Unless It is not practicable, classes should be conducted in rooms that are free of religious symbols and other religious items, or such items are covered and not visible.
8. If state funds are being used to purchase spaces for eligible children in a School Readiness program operated by faith-based organizations, these programs must be non-sectarian (non-religious). It is not enough to allow students or their families to “opt out” of portions of the program which are religious in nature.
9. Faith-based providers must have a written plan approved by the Council that details how they will provide a non-sectarian program for School Readiness children.

T. Nutrition Services

Section 10-16q of the General Statutes requires each school readiness program to address nutrition services. Nutrition services include:

1. Identification and documentation of children’s nutrition needs;
2. Meals and snacks served meet CACFP requirements; and
3. Nutrition services, including nutrition education, provided by the program.

U. Site Visitation and Monitoring Policy

1. All sub-grantee programs will be visited at least quarterly by the School Readiness Liaison for the purpose of supporting the program.
2. Unannounced visits may be made by the School Readiness Liaison or the School Readiness Monitor.
3. The purpose of the monitoring visit is to ensure the program's adherence to the mandates of the School Readiness grant program such as accreditation, staff credentials, implementation of the quality components, enrollment, hours of operation, curriculum alignment with Early Learning and Development Standards, child assessments, outcome measurements of children and to identify the need for technical assistance to meet those standards.
4. Site and monitoring visits will not attempt to duplicate licensing inspections, but if the SRC becomes aware of what appear to be licensing violations or practices that place children at risk, an immediate report will be made to the appropriate state agency, and parents will be notified.
5. School Readiness providers will cooperate with the SRC and its agent, and evaluation subcontractors in their efforts to measure program quality and adherence to standards.

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6. All programs that are required to be licensed by the state Department of Public Health must be in full compliance with licensing regulations.
7. In the event that any complaint is filed with the Department of Public Health, the Department of Children and Families, or any other police or investigative agency concerning an alleged act at the site:
 - a. The Superintendent of Schools or their designee is to be notified by the Provider of the details of the complaint. Such notification shall include the date and time of the alleged act, the nature of the complaint, the results of any investigation by Provider personnel, and any action taken by the Provider to correct the situation.
 - b. Notification shall be made within 24 hours of the time that the Provider is made aware of the complaint.
 - c. The Provider shall make the Superintendent of Schools aware of any findings made by the investigating agency.

V. Transition to Kindergarten

1. All School Readiness programs and the Colchester Public Schools will work collaboratively to develop and implement a plan and procedure to ensure that children and their families experience a smooth and successful transition through the following best practices:
 - a. provide program continuity through developmentally appropriate curricula;
 - b. promote and maintain ongoing communication and collaboration with one another;
 - c. prepare and support children and involve their families in a partnership to ensure the successful transition to kindergarten.
2. All school readiness programs and Colchester Public Schools will work collaboratively to provide for the transfer of records and other relevant information (with appropriate parental permission) to the kindergarten program prior to the child's entry to school.

W. Program Adherence to OEC Guiding Policy and Program Operations, and Standards

1. It is the expectation of all School Readiness approved sites that they adhere to all valid and applicable Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program General Policies distributed by the Connecticut State Office of Early Childhood.

Programs can review and print all General Policies from the State Office of Early Childhood's website at: <https://www.ctoec.org/general-policies/> It is expected that all School Readiness providers read and understand all policies.

2. Funded Providers, while autonomous in their program operations, must comply with the standards as stated in the following documents:

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- a. Valid and applicable Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program General Policies from OEC;
- b. School Readiness Grant Request For Proposal;
- c. School Readiness Council Policies for Programs receiving School Readiness Funds; and
- d. School Readiness Legislation.

Need for clarification on the application of any of these standards is to be brought to the attention of the Council through the School Readiness Liaison who can be contacted at 860-537-0717.

X. Approval of School Readiness Policies

The School Readiness Council has approved said policies on November 5, 2020 as verified by the School Readiness Council Co-Chairs.

Joseph A. Nard 11/12/20 Deanne Page 11/12/20
 School Readiness Council Co-Chair Date School Readiness Council Co-Chair Date

Y. Acknowledgement of School Readiness Policies

School Readiness sub-grantee programs will sign the policies at the start of their service provision and any time after the policies have been revised. Record of signatures will be kept in the sub-grantee School Readiness program binder.

I, _____, as the designated and authorized contact person for _____ (insert agency or program name) affirm that this program shall adhere to all School Readiness policies and have read and understand all School Readiness policies.

 Authorized Signature

 Date

Revision History:

First Revision Adopted January 22, 2007; Second Revision Adopted 2/25/08; Third Revision Adopted 3/19/09; Fourth Revision, Adopted 2/4/2010; Fifth Revision, Adopted 4/19/2012; Sixth Revision, Adopted 5/7/2015; Updated 9/30/2015; Updated 1/21/2016; Seventh Revision, Approved 11/5/2020

Approved 11.5.2020