

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 21-171—sHB 6558

Education Committee

Appropriations Committee

**AN ACT CONCERNING ISSUES RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND SERVICES IN
CONNECTICUT**

SUMMARY: This act allows the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) commissioner to issue up to seven family child care home licenses to a person or group of people, in a partnership with an association, organization, corporation, institution, or public or private agency, to provide child care services in a commissioner-approved space outside of a family home (§ 1). Under prior law, OEC issued family child care home licenses only for child care services provided in the licensee's private home.

The act also does the following:

1. allows family child care home licensees to use an OEC-approved substitute staff member to provide more than an hour of child care under specific circumstances (§ 1),
2. creates a 13-member task force to analyze and make recommendations on issues relating to Connecticut's early childhood workforce development needs (§ 2),
3. expands eligibility for Care 4 Kids child care subsidies to include families with a parent or caretaker enrolled or participating in certain postsecondary education and workforce training programs (§ 3),
4. requires the OEC commissioner to add new categories of parents and caretakers to the list of people who must receive preference in the Care 4 Kids priority intake and eligibility system (§ 3), and
5. requires OEC to allow Care 4 Kids-eligible families to participate in a state-contracted child care center program in FYs 22 and 23 (§ 4).

The act also makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

§ 1 — FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME LICENSE EXPANSION

License Terms and Applicant Eligibility

These licenses must be issued in accordance with existing law (unless otherwise specified under the act) and may be issued in FYs 22-26 for up to one space in each of the following cities: Bridgeport, Danbury, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Stamford, or Waterbury. They expire on June 30, 2026, subject to the commissioner's authority to suspend or revoke them at any time under the law.

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Application Process

The act requires prospective licensees for the seven family child care home licenses to submit the following items as part of their licensure application: (1) a copy of the current fire marshal certificate of compliance with the Fire Safety Code and (2) written verification of compliance with the State Building Code, local zoning and building requirements, and local health ordinances. Additionally, the act allows the OEC commissioner to (1) require applicants to comply with additional conditions related to the health and safety of children to be served in these facilities and (2) waive any requirement that does not apply to these facilities.

§ 1 — SUBSTITUTE STAFF IN FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

The act allows family child care home licensees to use an OEC-approved substitute staff member to provide child care for more than one hour while the absent licensee attends a medical appointment, receives medical treatment, or completes education or training. The act specifies that using a substitute staff member for these purposes does not constitute a transfer or franchise of the family child care home. The licensee must (1) provide advance notice to the enrolled children's parents and guardians about the dates and times the substitute will be providing child care and (2) continue to maintain control of day-to-day operations of the family child care home.

§ 2 — EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

Scope

The act requires the task force to examine the following:

1. ways to encourage equity-based practices in early childhood education preparation and professional development;
2. ways to address inequity in access to employment opportunities and compensation in the early childhood workforce;
3. the feasibility of creating a new, co-authored license that would offer multiple levels of flexibility to address the range of ages, settings, and roles in the early childhood field (including a professional continuum for assistants, lead teachers, generalists, and specialists, such as early intervention, mental health, integrated special education, and rehabilitation therapies); and
4. workforce demands in the state related to the need for early childhood educators providing child care services for infants and toddlers and children up to ages six, seven, or eight.

Additionally, the act requires the task force to make recommendations about the following topics:

1. legislation for early childhood educator preparation requirements;

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2. creating a new early childhood teacher license or credential jointly issued by OEC and the State Department of Education (SDE);
3. developing a unifying framework for early childhood educator preparation, in accordance with the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Council for Exceptional Children – Division of Early Childhood, to define levels for competencies and compensation such as (a) professional development and alternative routes for aides or classroom assistants; (b) associate degree preparation and alternative routes for assistant teachers; (c) bachelor’s degree preparation or post-baccalaureate work for head teachers; (d) bachelor’s degree preparation, post-baccalaureate work, or graduate degree attainment for specialists; and (e) alignment with competencies to address adult learners, experience in the field, as well as capacity in languages, community content, and cultural norms;
4. methods for increasing compensation related to competency and degree attainment that will work across all sectors of the early care and education sector, including subsidized and parent fee supported programs; and
5. early childhood workforce development and job opportunity creation.

Membership

The table below describes the required expertise for the 13 task force members and their respective appointing authorities. The act allows any members appointed by legislative leaders to be General Assembly members.

Task Force Membership

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Member(s) and Required Expertise</i>
House speaker (2)	Early childhood education professor at a Connecticut public higher education institution Representative of a school readiness program or state-funded child care center
Senate president pro tempore (2)	Community college faculty member Representative of a private child care provider that is not receiving state financial assistance for the development or operation of his or her child care center or school readiness funding
House majority leader	Representative of the Capitol Region Education Council
Senate majority leader	Family child care home operator or representative of an organization that represents or supports family child care

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	homes
House minority leader	Representative of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
Senate minority leader	Representative of a state or national early childhood accrediting organization
N/A	OEC commissioner, or the commissioner's designee
N/A	SDE commissioner, or the commissioner's designee
N/A	Co-chairs of the Connecticut Consortium for the Advancement of Early Childhood Educators
N/A	State Education Resource Center executive director, or the director's designee

The act requires the above appointments to be made by July 31, 2021, and appointing authorities to fill any vacancies that may arise.

Leadership, Staff, and Meetings

Under the act, the House speaker's and Senate president pro tempore's appointees must serve as the task force chairpersons, and the Education Committee administrative staff must serve as task force staff. The chairpersons must schedule the first meeting by August 30, 2021.

The task force must report its findings to the Education Committee by January 1, 2023. It must terminate on the date it submits the report or on January 1, 2023, whichever is later.

§ 3 — EXPANDED CARE 4 KIDS ELIGIBILITY

The act expands eligibility for Care 4 Kids child care subsidies to families with a parent or caretaker who is enrolled or participating in any of the following:

1. a public or private degree-granting college or university,
2. a private occupational school,
3. a job training or employment program administered by a regional workforce development board,
4. a Department of Labor (DOL)-administered apprenticeship program,
5. a State Board of Education-approved alternate route to certification program,
6. an adult education program or other high school equivalency program, or
7. a local Even Start program or other adult education program approved by the OEC commissioner.

Under the act, these groups are only eligible for and may receive Care 4 Kids benefits if certain COVID-19 related relief funds are available under federal law (i.e., the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act

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(P.L. 116-260) or the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2)) and designated by the commissioner to fund the benefits.

Additionally, it requires the OEC commissioner to add new categories to the list of people who must receive preference in the Care 4 Kids priority intake and eligibility system. The categories are parents or caretakers who are:

1. participating in a DOL apprenticeship program,
2. enrolled in an adult education program or other high school equivalency program,
3. participating in a job training or employment program administered by a regional workforce development board, or
4. enrolled in a public or private degree-granting college or university.