

**Office of Early Childhood Responses to Questions from the
Appropriations Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee
March 16, 2021**

1) Overview of federal COVID programs and spending – amount and funding

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economics Security Act (CARES Act), the State of Connecticut was awarded \$23,504,479. The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, as the CCDF Program administrator for the State, has developed and implemented a number of programs during the pandemic to help stabilize our child care infrastructure. As of March 5th, 2021, we had expended \$16,097,068.80, with an additional \$6,640,030 obligated. That leaves about 3% (or \$767,380) to be combined with the activities budgeted for under the newly awarded Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA). This is exclusive of any GEER or CRF funds awarded to OEC.

A detailed report of programs and expenditures is attached.

2) Detail Smart Start funding by source and purpose, including General Fund and Bonding

The Connecticut Smart Start Program was established under Public Act No. 14-41. After various legislation changes regarding funding sources, Sec. 10-508 states “the State Bond Commission shall have the power from time to time to authorize the issuance of bonds of the state in one or more series and in principal amounts not exceeding in the aggregate \$63,519,149, ...”, with ten million effective each fiscal year beginning July 1, 2019 through July 1, 2023.

Sec. 10-507 established the “Smart Start competitive capital grant account” (containing amounts authorized by the State Bond Commission in accordance with 10-508), and the Smart Start competitive operating grant account, “which shall be a separate, nonlapsing account within the General Fund”.

In fiscal years 2016-2018, PA 17-2 introduced Tobacco Settlement Funds to the agency for the purpose of funding the operations grant of the Smart Start program, of which, OEC has a balance of \$520,818 on hand. The Office of Early Childhood has \$359,293 of bond funds in the Smart Start competitive capital grant account.

3) B23 Caseload and expenditure detail, including parent fees over the past several years

SFY2021 – July, 2020 – January, 2021

Between 6/1/20 and 1/31/21 the Birth to Three System supported the provision of Early Intervention Services (EIS)* to the families of 10,914 children (10,798 unduplicated)

SFY 2020

Between 6/1/19 and 5/31/20 the Birth to Three System supported the provision of EIS to the families of 14,896 children (14,487 unduplicated)

SFY 2019

Between 6/1/18 and 5/31/19 the Birth to Three System supported the provision of EIS to the families of 15,235 children (14,750 unduplicated)

SFY 2018

Between 6/1/17 and 5/31/18 the Birth to Three System supported the provision of EIS to the families of 14,032 children (13,618 unduplicated)

*(EIS = Eligibility evaluations, and then if eligible, assessments, IFSP meetings, and EI "Treatment" Services)

4) State Head Start and other caseload data to support projected needs over the biennium

The total funded capacity for SFY 2020 for State Head Start Services was 228 new spaces in 14 communities (220 Full-Day/Full-Year Preschool spaces and 8 FD/FY Infant/Toddler spaces).

State Head Start Innovative Enhancements grants made 895 Extended Day/Extended Year Preschool spaces possible in 23 communities, and added 16 Part-Day/Part-Year Preschool spaces.

The total capacity for SFY 2021 was essentially the same, since it was a continuation year of the 2-year grant. The capacity is closer to 297 new spaces for the Services component, and is anticipated to be the same as SFY 2020 for Innovative Enhancements.

As of October 1, Enrollment in State Head Start Services was 194, a drop of 34 approximately 15% from FY 2020.

Beyond funding spaces, the grants enhanced family literacy initiatives and family engagement; supported STEM curriculum; benefited Dual Language Learners; and enhanced Behavioral Health supports - all the more necessary due to the stressors faced by children and families due to the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in program closures on a temporary basis and lower enrollment that is beginning to rebound. Planned summer programming was not

implemented in many cases, and extended day options were not feasible. This fiscal year, in the midst of the pandemic, would not be a good measure of the normal program capacity. A sample of quarterly reports submitted to date indicates that actual enrollment has been approximately 80% of capacity -- even less than this as programs initially reopened for on-site learning after COVID-related closures. Remote services have been offered whenever feasible.

5) CCDF Quality Enhancement line item – detail how funding is expended.

Child Care Quality Enhancement Expenditures

2019

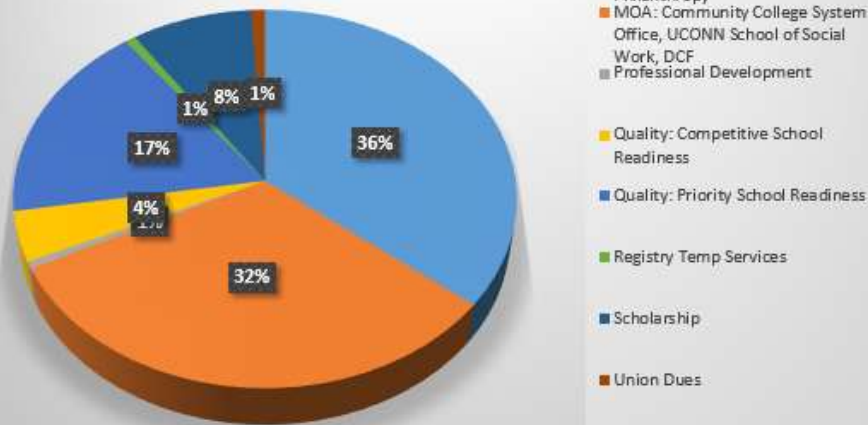
Activity	Amount
Contracts: CCEI, CT AEYC, EASTCONN, United Way	3,920,300.00
MOA: UCONN School of Social Work	465,156.00
Professional Development	28,036.63
Quality: Competitive School Readiness	178,526.00
Quality: Preschool Development	419,295.00
Quality: Priority School Readiness	714,430.00
Scholarship	847,861.15
2019 Grand Total	6,573,604.78



Child Care Quality Enhancement Expenditures 2020

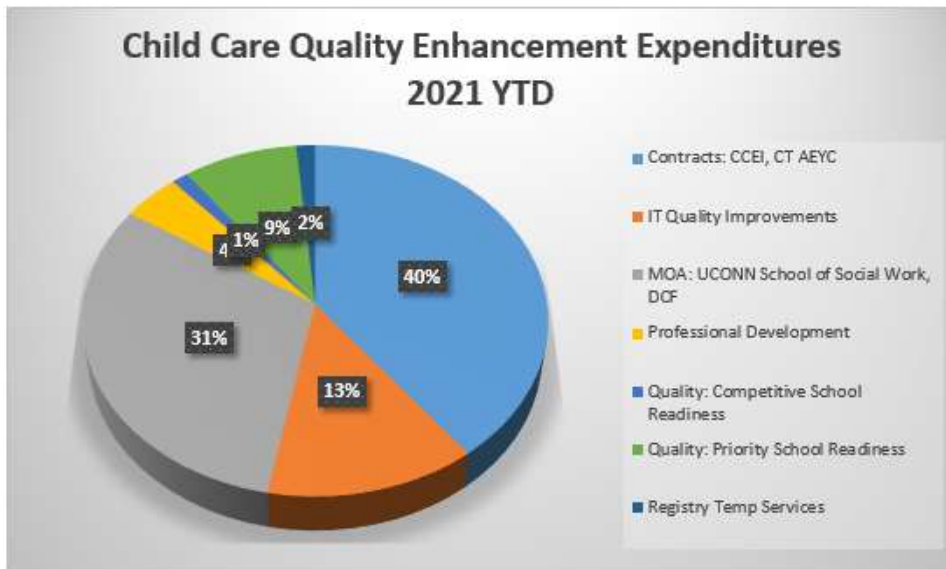
Activity	Amount
Contracts: CCEI, CT AEYC, EASTCONN, CT Council for Philanthropy	1,473,831.00
MOA: Community College System Office, UCONN School of Social Work, DCF	1,317,623.00
Professional Development	24,159.29
Quality: Competitive School Readiness	176,145.00
Quality: Priority School Readiness	714,430.00
Registry Temp Services	31,162.84
Scholarship	350,000.00
Union Dues	41,485.43
2020 Grand Total	4,128,836.56

Child Care Quality Enhancement Expenditures 2020



Child Care Quality Enhancement Expenditures 2021 YTD

Activity	Amount
Contracts: CCEI, CT AEYC	646,444.00
IT Quality Improvements	219,298.15
MOA: UCONN School of Social Work, DCF	509,501.00
Professional Development	71,900.63
Quality: Competitive School Readiness	20,333.65
Quality: Priority School Readiness	142,723.75
Registry Temp Services	23,463.07
2021 YTD Grand Total	<u>1,633,664.25</u>



6) Clarification about timeline to get the funding out for the new \$276M in federal funding

- Grant Stabilization - Obligated by Sept. '22, liquidated by Sept. '23
 - 90 Days from Bill sign to report to ACF if have not obligated 50% of grant funds.
- CCDBG (CCDF) - Obligated by Sept '23, Liquidated by Sept. '24

7) **Can new federal relief funds be used to support Birth to Three (Family Participation Fees)?**

The American Rescue Plan includes \$250 million for IDEA Part C. This is a nationwide figure and the exact allocation to Connecticut has yet to be determined. The timing and rules for the use of these funds have not been developed, but we have been informed that it will likely be an addition to each state's Part C allocation. The funds will support the Birth to Three System as a whole.

Any changes to the Birth to Three System of Payment policy (Family Participation Fees and use of commercial insurance) must go out for 30-day comment and must be pre-approved by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

8) Ideas about legislative or administrative changes to support foster parents with C4K funding: speed up the payment and/or create new eligibility group?

Commissioner Bye and Commissioner Dorantes have discussed this issue and committed to identify a solution that works for families and providers. Discussions between the OEC and DCF are underway.

Note: Children in foster care are categorically eligible for Early Head Start and Head Start regardless of family income. Head Start is a federally funded program that provides a full range of comprehensive services prenatal to age 5 for children and their families including child care, home visiting, and family supports. The CT Head Start Collaboration Office will work to promote stronger linkages between DCF and Head Start to refer and enroll interested foster families.

9) Changes in available child care over the past year (closures and openings)

Annual Child Care Summary (March 2020 – March 2021)

Child Care Facilities¹

In March 2020, only 1502 child care programs were open – or 37.9% of programs. Open programs by type:

- 1096 Family Child Cares (56.9%)
- 395 Child Care Centers (28.7%)
- 11 Family Group Home Centers (55.0%)
- 0 License Exempt programs (0%)

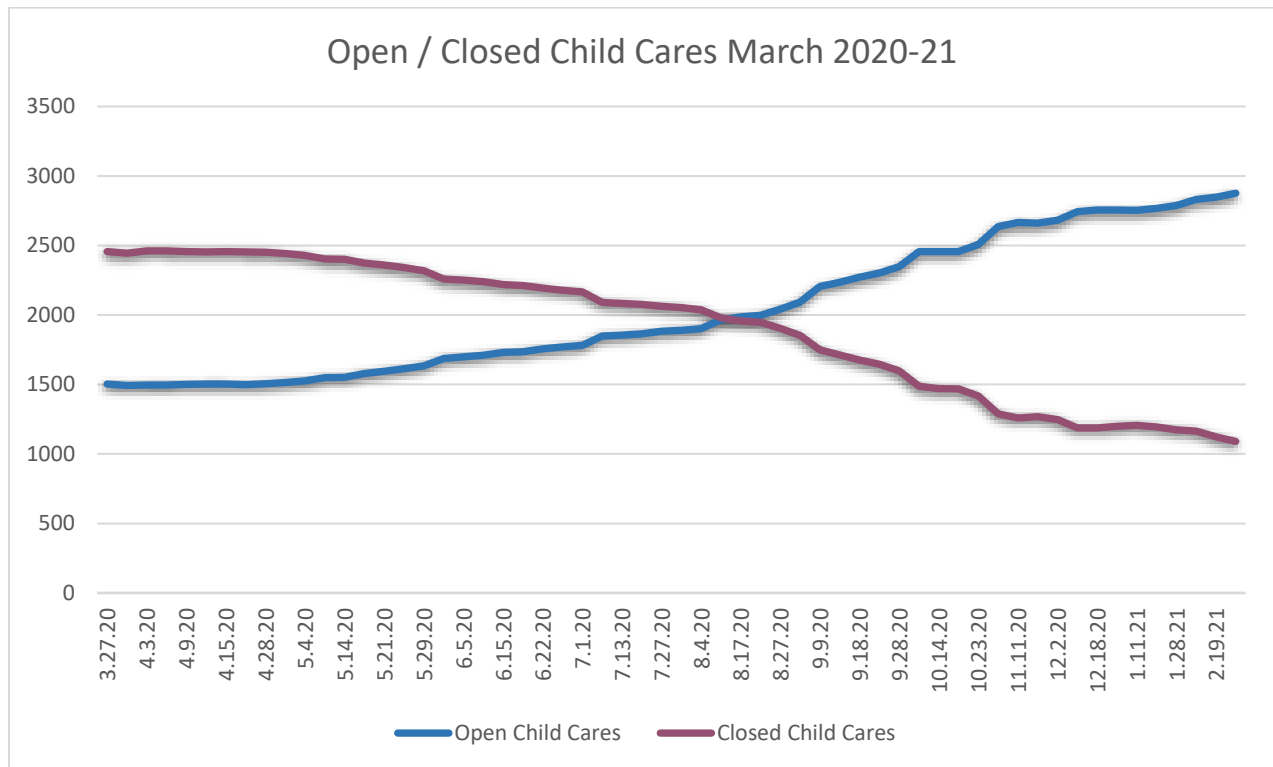
By March 2021, 2876 child care programs were open – or 72.5% of programs. Open programs by type:

- 1574 Family Child Cares (81.8%)
- 1139 Child Care Centers (82.9%)
- 17 Family Group Home Centers (85.0%)
- 146 License Exempt programs (22.6%)²

¹ Data Source: 211 Child Care Survey

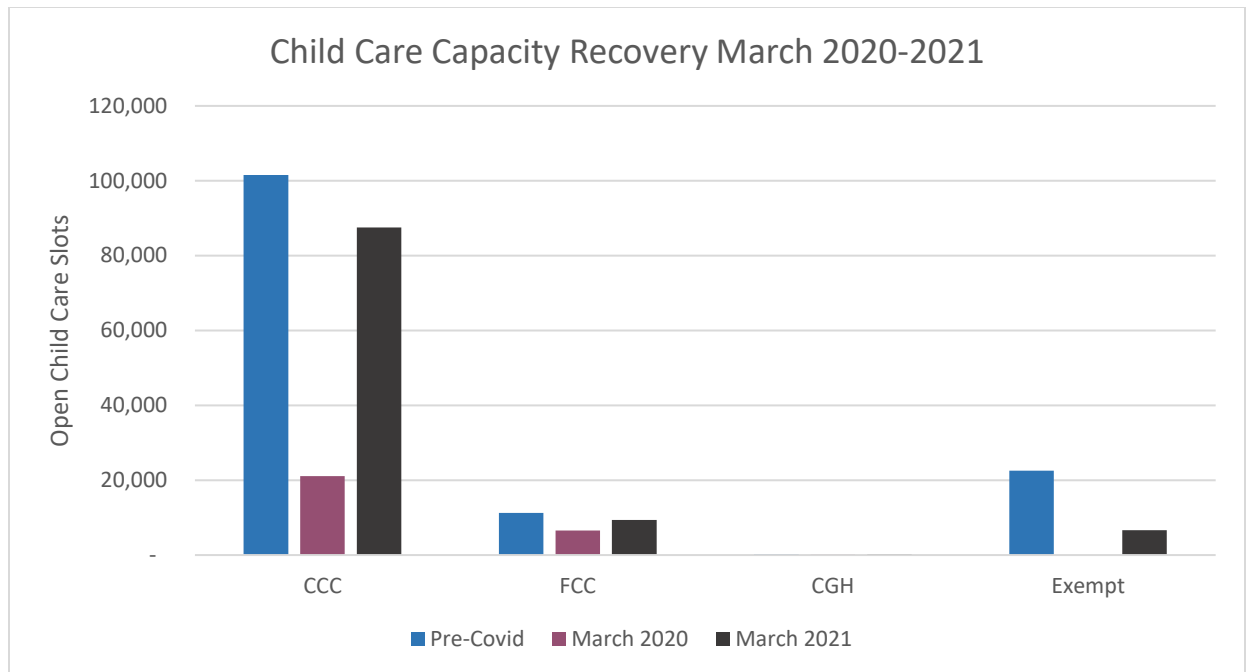
² License Exempt programs are often co-located with schools and other otherwise licensed facilities. These programs are expected to open as schools re-open.

- ✓ More than 80% of licensed child care programs are now open
- ✓ Represents 1374 programs re-opening
- ✓ A doubling of the number of open programs since the beginning of the pandemic



Child Care Capacity

Pre-Covid there were 135,604 available child care slots. In March 2020, there were just an estimated 27,818 available slots or 21% of pre-Covid capacity. By March 2021, there were 103,819 slots available or 76.5% of pre-Covid capacity.



10) List of OEC programs by SID, description of programs, # of children/families served, allocation, lapses – over last three years.

Collection of this data is underway and will be shared with the Appropriations Committee when completed.