

Office of Early Childhood OEC64800

Permanent Full-Time Positions

Fund	Actual FY 23	Actual FY 24	Appropriation FY 25	Governor Recommended		Legislative	
				FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27
General Fund	118	118	118	118	118	118	118

Budget Summary

Account	Actual FY 23	Actual FY 24	Appropriation FY 25	Governor Recommended		Legislative	
				FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27
Personal Services	8,410,624	8,275,873	10,147,924	9,926,912	9,926,912	9,926,912	9,926,912
Other Expenses	316,878	5,134,202	1,319,731	1,319,731	7,919,731	1,694,731	8,294,731
Other Current Expenses							
Birth to Three	31,892,788	34,351,477	32,452,407	33,293,626	40,293,626	33,293,626	36,093,626
Evenstart	295,455	545,454	545,456	545,456	545,456	545,456	545,456
2Gen - TANF	324,225	540,473	572,500	575,685	575,685	575,685	575,685
Nurturing Families Network	14,089,169	12,484,084	12,139,479	12,669,995	14,469,995	12,669,995	14,469,995
Early Child Care Provider Stabilization Payments	69,908,522	-	-	-	-	-	-
OEC Parent Cabinet	-	143,500	150,000	152,264	152,264	152,264	152,264
Capitol Child Development Center	-	-	-	263,000	263,000	263,000	263,000
Other Than Payments to Local Governments							
Head Start Services	4,867,305	4,993,641	5,083,238	5,833,238	5,833,238	5,833,238	5,833,238
Care4Kids TANF/CCDF	57,809,329	81,513,372	112,827,096	147,957,756	151,227,096	147,957,756	151,227,096
Child Care Quality Enhancements	4,189,292	5,891,953	5,954,530	5,954,530	5,954,530	5,954,530	5,954,530
Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership	1,109,419	1,374,236	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
Early Care and Education	139,466,790	154,926,475	190,137,329	193,845,725	201,845,725	193,845,725	201,845,725
Smart Start	3,249,999	3,250,000	3,325,000	3,325,000	6,325,000	3,325,000	6,325,000
Agency Total - General Fund	335,929,795	313,424,740	376,154,690	417,162,918	446,832,258	417,537,918	443,007,258

Account	Governor Recommended		Legislative		Difference from Governor	
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27

Policy Revisions

Provide Funding for Smart Start

Smart Start	-	3,000,000	-	3,000,000	-	-
Total - General Fund	-	3,000,000	-	3,000,000	-	-

Background

PA 14-41 created the Smart Start grant program, which funds the creation or expansion of preschool programs in public schools. In 2021, the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) offered the Smart Start for Recovery Grant to existing Smart Start grantees and school districts with demonstrated needs for more preschool spaces. This pandemic-response grant aimed to boost the availability of high-quality preschool, particularly in underserved communities, by increasing the number of public-school preschool classrooms. The goal was to provide free preschool access to children and families who might otherwise lack such opportunities. To date, 25 school districts have received a Smart Start grant, with 23 current grantees, and 10 school districts were awarded a Smart Start for Recovery grant.

Account	Governor Recommended		Legislative		Difference from Governor	
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27

Governor

Provide funding of \$3 million in FY 27 to allow current grantees to maintain their programs at increased rates and allow Smart Start for Recovery grantees to continue their programs.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Provide Funding for the Waterford Upstart Program

Other Expenses	-	-	375,000	375,000	375,000	375,000
Total - General Fund	-	-	375,000	375,000	375,000	375,000

Background

Waterford Upstart is an at-home, technology-driven early learning program designed to prepare preschool-aged children for kindergarten. It delivers an adaptive curriculum focusing on reading, math, and science. The program has been available in Connecticut in some capacity since 2022.

Legislative

Provide funding of \$375,000 in FY 26 and FY 27 to support the Waterford Upstart program.

Provide Funding for the Family Bridge Program

Nurturing Families Network	-	1,800,000	-	1,800,000	-	-
Total - General Fund	-	1,800,000	-	1,800,000	-	-

Background

The Family Bridge program provides universal home visiting services to families with newborns in certain regions of the state to facilitate the transition from hospital to home. Family Bridge offers at-home visits from registered nurses and certified community health workers.

Governor

Provide funding of \$1.8 million in FY 27 for the Family Bridge program.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Provide Funding to Continue the Tri-Share Pilot Program

Other Expenses	-	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-	-
Total - General Fund	-	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-	-

Background

PA 24-91 Section 3 requires the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to establish and administer the Tri-Share Child Care Matching Program, which is a public-private partnership that shares child care costs among parents, employers, and the state. The program is intended to help families who can't afford child care but don't qualify for other assistance. The program is currently being piloted in New London County.

Governor

Provide funding of \$1.6 million in FY 27 to support the continuation of the Tri-Share pilot program.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Maintain Current Birth to Three Rate Structure

Birth to Three	-	6,000,000	-	-	-	(6,000,000)
Total - General Fund	-	6,000,000	-	-	-	(6,000,000)

Background

Birth to Three service providers are funded through a fee-for-service (FFS) payment structure which is a model where providers are paid based on the individual services they provide to patients. The Birth to Three rate study conducted by Public Consulting Group and published in January 2024 provides recommendations that include FFS and a new tiered rate system based on providers' experience and credentialing levels.

Account	Governor Recommended		Legislative		Difference from Governor	
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27

Governor

Provide funding of \$6 million in FY 27 to reflect increased rates for Birth to Three related to implementing a new tiered rate system.

Legislative

Maintain the current Birth to Three rate structure.

Provide Funding to Increase Birth to Three Rates

Birth to Three	-	-	-	3,800,000	-	3,800,000
Total - General Fund	-	-	-	3,800,000	-	3,800,000

Background

The Birth to Three rate study conducted by Public Consulting Group and published in January 2024 provides recommendations that includes rate increases for Birth to Three services under the current rate structure.

Legislative

Provide funding of \$3.8 million in FY 27 to support Birth to Three rate increases.

Reduce Funding for General Administrative Payments (GAP)

Birth to Three	-	(1,000,000)	-	(1,000,000)	-	-
Total - General Fund	-	(1,000,000)	-	(1,000,000)	-	-

Background

The General Administrative Payment (GAP) was introduced in 2017 to financially support Birth to Three programs during their transition from a bundled payment system to a fee-for-service model. The payment is intended to reimburse the non-billable time for Birth to Three providers that support children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) of less than nine hours per month with at least one service delivered in that month.

Governor

Reduce funding of \$1 million in FY 27 for GAP payments.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Provide Funding for Early Start CT

Early Care and Education	-	8,000,000	-	8,000,000	-	-
Total - General Fund	-	8,000,000	-	8,000,000	-	-

Background

PA 24-78 Section 25 requires the Office of Early Childhood to operate and administer Early Start CT, which is a new state funding stream that combines current School Readiness grants, Child Day Care Contracts, and State Head Start supplemental grants, effective July 1, 2025.

Governor

Provide funding of \$8 million in FY 27 to reflect a 4% increase for Early Start CT.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Adjust Funding for Sparkler App

Birth to Three	-	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)
Total - General Fund	-	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)

Background

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) offers the Sparkler mobile app as part of the Help Me Grow initiative, which aims to ensure children have access to developmental screenings and support services. The app is a free resource that helps families track their children's development, provides learning activities, and connects them with support resources.

Governor

Provide funding of \$2 million in FY 27 to support continued use of the Sparkler mobile app.

Account	Governor Recommended		Legislative		Difference from Governor	
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27

Legislative

Do not provide funding in FY 27 related to the Sparkler mobile app.

Reallocate Funding to Support Additional State Head Start Supplemental Grant Funds

Head Start Services	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	-	-
Early Care and Education	(750,000)	(750,000)	(750,000)	(750,000)	-	-
Total - General Fund	-	-	-	-	-	-

Background

Head Start is a national program that provides early learning, health, and family well-being services to children and families while engaging parents as partners. The State Head Start Supplement grant provides additional funding to federal Head Start programs in Connecticut.

Governor

Reallocate funding of \$750,000 in both FY 26 and FY 27 from the Early Care and Education line item to the Head Start Services line item.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Transfer the Capitol Child Development Center from OLM to OEC

Capitol Child Development Center	263,000	263,000	263,000	263,000	-	-
Total - General Fund	263,000	263,000	263,000	263,000	-	-

Background

The Capitol Child Development Center (CCDC) has been in operation since 1988 and was created as a model program by the Connecticut General Assembly to provide childcare services for children eight weeks through five years of age.

Governor

Transfer funding of \$263,000 in FY 26 and FY 27 from the Office of Legislative Management (OLM) to the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) related to the CCDC.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Current Services**Provide Funding for Care 4 Kids to Support Rate Increases and Compliance with Federal Requirements**

Care4Kids TANF/CCDF	35,130,660	38,400,000	35,130,660	38,400,000	-	-
Total - General Fund	35,130,660	38,400,000	35,130,660	38,400,000	-	-

Background

In 2023, per-student rates increased by 11% for licensed child care centers and home-based providers and by 6% for unlicensed providers. Additionally, the 2024 Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Final Rule (45 CFR Part 98) mandates that Connecticut ensure equal access to child care by setting reimbursement rates at no less than 50% of the current market rate. Connecticut must demonstrate progress toward meeting this requirement for the following types of care: infant center care, preschool center care, infant family child care, and preschool family child care.

Governor

Provide funding of \$35,130,660 in FY 26 and \$38,400,000 in FY 27 to support rate increases for Care4Kids.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Account	Governor Recommended		Legislative		Difference from Governor	
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27

Provide Funding for the Start Early - Early Childhood Development Initiative

Other Expenses	-	5,000,000	-	5,000,000	-	-
Total - General Fund	-	5,000,000	-	5,000,000	-	-

Background

PA 22-118 Section 459 requires the Office of Early Childhood to establish and administer the Start Early - Early Childhood Development Initiative. As part of this initiative, the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) has partnered with the TMW Center for Early Learning + Public Health to conduct a three-year research project to measure and enhance the quality of its child care and early learning programs and offer support to the early childhood workforce. OEC has also partnered with the University of Connecticut to implement an Early Start Intervention study that includes family support teams to support families, teachers, and programs to improve the quality of children's home and early care environments.

Governor

Provide funding of \$5 million in FY 27 to support the last phase of the Start Early - Early Childhood Development Initiative.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Adjust Funding to Reflect Current Requirements

Personal Services	(600,000)	(600,000)	(600,000)	(600,000)	-	-
Total - General Fund	(600,000)	(600,000)	(600,000)	(600,000)	-	-

Governor

Reduce funding by \$600,000 in FY 26 and FY 27 to reflect current agency requirements.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Annualize FY 2025 Private Provider COLA

Birth to Three	841,219	841,219	841,219	841,219	-	-
Nurturing Families Network	530,516	530,516	530,516	530,516	-	-
Early Care and Education	4,458,396	4,458,396	4,458,396	4,458,396	-	-
Total - General Fund	5,830,131	5,830,131	5,830,131	5,830,131	-	-

Background

Private provider organizations contract to provide direct health and human services for clients of various state agencies, including: the Departments of Aging and Disability Services, Children and Families, Correction, Developmental, Housing, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Public Health, Social Services, Veterans Affairs, the Office of Early Childhood and the Judicial Department.

Governor

Provide funding of \$5,830,131 in both FY 26 and FY 27 to support annualization of the private provider COLA.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Annualize Cost of Existing Wage Agreements

Personal Services	378,988	378,988	378,988	378,988	-	-
2Gen - TANF	3,185	3,185	3,185	3,185	-	-
OEC Parent Cabinet	2,264	2,264	2,264	2,264	-	-
Total - General Fund	384,437	384,437	384,437	384,437	-	-

Background

The Governor's Recommended Budget provides funding of \$124.4 million in FY 26 and FY 27, across nine appropriated funds, to reflect current wage-related adjustments resulting from existing wage agreements.

Governor

Provide funding of \$384,437 in both FY 26 and FY 27 to reflect this agency's increased wage costs.

Legislative

Same as Governor

Totals

Budget Components	Governor Recommended		Legislative		Difference from Governor	
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26	FY 27
FY 25 Appropriation - GF	376,154,690	376,154,690	376,154,690	376,154,690	-	-
Policy Revisions	263,000	21,663,000	638,000	17,838,000	375,000	(3,825,000)
Current Services	40,745,228	49,014,568	40,745,228	49,014,568	-	-
Total Recommended - GF	417,162,918	446,832,258	417,537,918	443,007,258	375,000	(3,825,000)