



Equitable Access to Child Care in Connecticut

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) administers state and federally-funded child care and early childhood education for more than 30,000 families in the state of Connecticut. The establishment of the OEC in 2013 united staff and funding from five state agencies. While this unification consolidated staffing and funding, a lack of alignment across OEC's programs persisted. This left many families forced to navigate a burdensome system with different applications and eligibility requirements.

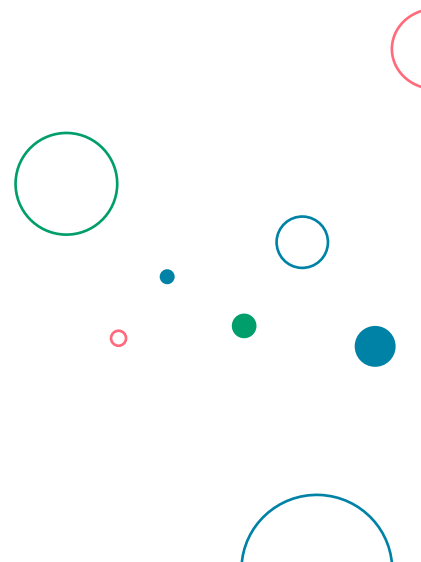
RESULTS

OEC is creating opportunities to engage providers and families for feedback, and using feedback to inform policy changes in OEC's 2019-2021 Federal Child Care Development Fund Plan. These efforts were possible because of significant early wins including:

- 1 Increased Staff Capacity and Planning:** OEC staff were tasked with rethinking program design, community engagement, and procurement processes.
- 2 Partnerships to Enable Family Centered Programs:** OEC strengthened cross-agency partnership with the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) to increase access to childcare supports for families experiencing homelessness, with Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) to explore increasing access to childcare supports for student-parents, and supported the establishment of family child care networks.
- 3 Fostered New Approaches for Engaging Community:** OEC deepened collaborative relationships with service provider working groups and community partners in support of its vision of developing a more holistic early care and education field across Connecticut. OEC partnered with Third Sector to facilitate conversations with providers on the impact of short-term policy changes, and these groups continue to meet to inform OEC's long-term strategic vision.

"The work with Third Sector opened the door to the idea that we can do contracting differently. Through this work, our teams rallied around a new focus on improved outcomes for underserved groups."

— Harriet Feldlaufer, Director of the Early Care and Education Division, OEC



ACTION

OEC set-out to break down agency silos, improve staff capacity to support long-term strategic planning, and build alignment across Early Care and Education programs. This culminated in four key action areas:

- **Community-Driven Action Planning:**
Hosted statewide series of action sessions in February of 2018 among legislators, foundations, providers, and families to translate pain points in the system into short-term, mid-term, and long-term priorities.
- **Capacity Building for Agency Staff:**
Conducted interactive design sessions grounded in common frameworks which led to the prioritization of outcomes metrics as they develop 2-generation pilot projects that will influence long-term policy decisions.
- **Recommendations for Legislative Reform:**
Supported legislative reform, including House Bills 5169 and 5449, and Senate Bill 437, during the 2018 Legislative Session that increase access to childcare for children experiencing homelessness, prioritizes infants and toddlers on the child care subsidy waitlist, and authorize a 2% funding carve out for piloting program improvements and evaluation.
- **Policy Alignment:** Drafted OEC's 2019-2021 Federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Plan and reformed agency level policies leveraging national best practices, 2-generation approaches, and the community action plan. Federal funding stream policy work included strengthening cross-agency partnerships with Connecticut State Colleges and Universities to improve outcomes for underserved populations.

"We wanted Third Sector to help us mature as an agency by engaging a broad group of stakeholders to focus on goals and impact across the Early Care and Education system to better serve families."

– Mary Farnsworth,
Former Director of Strategic Planning,
Office of Early Childhood



ABOUT

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood was established in 2013 to coordinate and improve the various early childhood programs and components in the state to create a cohesive, high-quality early childhood system.

Empowering Families was a national cohort of government agencies that received technical assistance from Third Sector to support improved outcomes for children and families through the use of outcomes-oriented contracting. The initiative was funded by a Social Innovation Fund grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Third Sector is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that is transforming the way communities connect people with human services. We partner with governments, providers, and their partners to generate positive, measurable outcomes for the people they serve.

To learn more, please visit thirdsectorcap.org or send an email to info@thirdsectorcap.org.

