

Early Care and Education Programs and Services in Connecticut

All Our Kin: All Our Kin bridges the divide between economic security and caretaking responsibility by combining a professional development course in early childhood education with an on-site child care collaborative. Unlike other economic development programs focused specifically either on job training or on providing child care, All Our Kin's Intensive Child Development Program innovatively addresses the two great problems faced by single parents on public assistance--lack of access to employment or education, and lack of access to child care--simultaneously. The Intensive program invests in those who are most invested in young children, and through empowering these caregivers, impacts not only their lives, but the lives of every child they go on to teach.

Birth to Three: Connecticut's Birth to Three System provides statewide services to families to meet the developmental and health-related needs of infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities. Services are provided in natural environments by a network of 44 local programs throughout the state. The state cost of services is offset by parent fees, commercial health insurance, IDEA Part C and Part B, and Medicaid.

Child Care Assistance Program: Connecticut's Child Care Assistance Program, Care 4 Kids, is funded by state and federal Child Care Development Block Grant funds. Care 4 Kids helps low to moderate income families in Connecticut pay for child care costs. This program is sponsored by the State of Connecticut's Department of Social Services (DSS). Working families in Care 4 Kids are required to pay a family fee. This sliding fee scale is set by the program based upon guidance from the Department of Social Services.

Child Day Care Licensing Program: The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is responsible for the administration of the child day care licensing program. Family day care homes, group day care homes and child day care centers are required to be licensed. The child care licensing specialists and supervisors, nurses, health program staff, administrative and support staff are dedicated to assuring that all licensed child day care programs operate at or above the required standards established by state statutes and regulations. This is accomplished by providing technical assistance, application processing, facility monitoring, complaint investigation and enforcement activities. The DPH licenses more than 4,000 child day care facilities.

Child Care Facilities Loan Fund (CCFLF): The CCFLF was created through School Readiness legislation, to finance the construction and quality of child care facilities. The CCFLF has established three separate programs: Tax-Exempt Financing Program, Guaranteed Loan Program and Small Direct Loan Program, all of which recognize the need for the adequate long-term planning of workforce and facility development. In 2007, the Connecticut General Assembly appropriated funds for the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA), and the State Department of Education (SDE), to develop a School Readiness expansion plan for Connecticut, focused specifically on facilities.

Child Care Infoline: 2-1-1 Child Care is a confidential and free child care referral telephone service in Connecticut - just dial 2-1-1. Child care referral specialists assist parents and child care providers in locating appropriate resources and referrals. Each child care setting is surveyed every six weeks to determine available capacity.

Child FIRST: Child FIRST is a model program to decrease the incidence of serious emotional disturbance, developmental learning problems, and abuse and neglect among high-risk young children in Greater Bridgeport, Connecticut. When mental health and child development problems first arise, Child FIRST works with pediatricians, teachers, and other community providers to identify, assess, and intervene with vulnerable children and their families. This program will be extended to five additional low income communities.

Connecticut Charts-a-Course: Connecticut Charts-A-Course is the statewide professional development, program improvement and Registry system for early care and education. CCAC offers a variety of supports to assist both individuals and programs in obtaining quality standards. Members of the **CCAC Registry** have the opportunity to access many valuable benefits including: a personal registry file tracking their education and training and advancement on the CCAC Career Ladder, Scholarship Assistance for training, education and credentials, the opportunity to become a trainer through our Training Approval Board, and Career Counseling in either English or Spanish. CCAC also offers preparation for the *Child Development Associate Credential* through the Training Program in Child Development. In addition, the Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP) offers a variety of resources and supports to early care and education programs seeking national accreditation, as well as supports for Program Administrators seeking the *CT Director's Credential* issued through Charter Oak State College.

Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP): Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP): Connecticut's AFP supports early care and education programs' participation in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation process. The accreditation process is a professional, voluntary, self-study and assessment system for early childhood programs. In 1997, the Connecticut Legislature passed a landmark School Readiness bill (PA97-258) that named the AFP as the model for a statewide effort of accreditation support to licensed child care centers and linked the AFP with Connecticut's professional registry (Connecticut Charts-a-Course). By early 1998, the AFP operated throughout the state. To date, the AFP has supported 450 public and private programs in Connecticut.

Department of Education (SDE) State-funded Child Care Centers: SDE contracts for approximately 4,200 child care slots at more than 100 locations in 36 municipalities throughout the state. These centers provide infant/toddler, preschool and school-age services. Activities funded by the child care centers are designed to provide safe, age-appropriate environments and full range of social, educational and recreational services to children and support services to their families. Enrollment is targeted towards families earning 75 percent of the state median

income level. Section 8-210b has authorized funding to support state child care centers for over 30 years for children disadvantaged by reasons of economic, social or environmental conditions. As of July 2011, under legislation, this program is administered by the State Department of Education (previously administered by the Department of Social Services).

Early Head Start: Early Head Start (EHS) is a federally funded program for low-income infants, toddlers, pregnant women and their families. EHS programs enhance children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; assist pregnant women to access comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care; support parents' efforts to fulfill their parental roles; and help parents move toward economic self-sufficiency. Programs are center-based or home-visiting or both.

Early Childhood Community Plans: The William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, in partnership with the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, the Connecticut Health and Development Institute, and the SDE, was established to build community capacity and support the development of comprehensive community plans for children, birth through 8, that address the areas of early care and education, social, emotional, behavioral and physical health, and family supports. Local plans offering the integration of health, safety and learning, have been created.

Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP): The ECCP is a mental health consultation program designed to meet the social and emotional needs of children birth to age 5 by offering support and consultation in the area of early care and education. The prevention and early intervention strategies provided by this program are aimed at promoting optimal outcomes for young children and their families.

Early Childhood Special Education: Early childhood special education as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA Part B) serves children ages three through five who require special education. Special education and related services are available to eligible children by age 3 and are provided by local and regional school districts.

Early Reading First: Early Reading First supports the development of early childhood centers of excellence that focus on all areas of development, especially on early language, cognitive, and pre-reading skills that prepare children for continued school success. Services are directed primarily to children from low-income families. This program will come to completion August 31, 2011.

Even Start Family Literacy: This two-generation program offers support to integrate early childhood education, adult literacy, parenting education and interactive parent and child literacy activities. The targeted population are low-income families with parents who are eligible for services under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and their children from birth through age 7.

Family Resource Centers: Family Resource Centers (FRCs) provide access, within a community, to a broad continuum of early childhood and family support services which foster the optimal development of children and families. They offer parent education and training; family support; preschool and school-age child care; teen pregnancy prevention (positive youth development services); and family day-care provider training. There are 61 FRCs in Connecticut.

Head Start: Head Start is a federally funded, national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families. In addition, supplemental state funds are available to federal Head Start grantees to increase the number of children being served, extend the program day for children being served, and enhance program quality as specified by legislation (CGS §10-16n).

Nurturing Families Network: The Nurturing Families Network is a no-cost, voluntary program that provides information, guidance and assistance to first-time parents whose children are at risk for abuse or neglect. Available through some 41 community agencies and birthing hospitals throughout Connecticut, the network offers three distinct, yet interwoven services: Home visiting, parenting groups and connecting parents with other services in the community.

Parents as Teachers (PAT): ConnPAT provides the Parents as Teachers National Center certification both for prenatal to Three Institutes and Three to Kindergarten. In addition, PAT provides technical assistance to over 120 PAT programs. In Connecticut these include Family Resource Centers, the Nurturing Families Network, and Early Head Start programs. These PAT-certified staff members provide technical assistance in a variety of ways, including individual home visits, group meetings, health and developmental screening and resource/referral services to over 4,000 children.

Parent Trust Fund: The Parent Trust Fund helps communities improve the health, safety and learning of their children by providing competitive grants to communities that give parents, grandparents and adult caregivers civic leadership skills they need to take the lead in their community for children. Parent engagement programs supported by the Parent Trust Fund include the nationally recognized Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), the UConn-sponsored People Empowering People (PEP), and the Parents Supporting Educational Excellence (PSEE), among others. The Fund serves an average of more than 1,100 parents annually across Connecticut.

School Readiness: In 1998 the School Readiness grant program was funded through legislation, Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) §16o-§16u, to provide spaces in community childcare programs and public school classrooms for 3- and 4-year old children in over 300 programs. Communities receiving this grant are eligible by virtue of being a priority school district, a municipality with a priority school, or ranked as one of the lowest 50 towns in wealth. School Readiness Councils consisting of co-leadership from the chief elected official and the

superintendent of schools are charged with coordinating a School Readiness program network. This initiative is jointly administered by the State Departments of Education and Social Services.

Striving Readers: This literacy plan will improve coordination and communication between Connecticut agencies, families and the communities through targeted professional development to increase knowledge and skills for birth-Grade 12 educators and caregivers, increased accountability for literacy education and activities, and improvements in curriculum and instruction throughout the state.