

# **A Plan for an Early Childhood System for Connecticut: The Office of Early Childhood**

**March 21, 2013**

**A Report of the Early Childhood Planning Team**

**Myra Jones-Taylor, Ph.D., Director**

## Table of Contents

I.	Executive Summary	2
II.	Introduction	3
III.	Early Childhood in Connecticut	9
IV.	Proposed Governance Model for Connecticut	15
V.	Planning for Implementation	23
VI.	Conclusion	28
Appendix A	Parent Outreach Initiative	
Appendix B	BUILD Initiative Report: Developing Early Childhood Governance	
Appendix C	BUILD Initiative Report: Key Themes Report	
Appendix D	Consolidated Early Childhood Programs, Funding, and Statutory Authority by Agency	

## I. Executive Summary

The scientific evidence is clear – investing in the wellbeing of young children lays the foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society. It is in Connecticut’s interest to ensure that families have access to the services necessary to promote the comprehensive developmental needs of their young children. Yet, Connecticut currently has a “non-system” for early childhood. There is no central agency that is held accountable for improved outcomes for young children in the state. Consequently, Connecticut lacks a unified vision for early childhood policy and service delivery.

In 2011 the legislature passed Public Act 11-181 to correct this problem, calling for a plan for the creation of a comprehensive early childhood system for Connecticut. Governor Malloy answered the call and appointed an Early Childhood Planning Director in May 2012. After an intense eight-month planning process that engaged numerous key stakeholders in Connecticut and national experts, the Governor proposed the creation of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). According to the Governor’s plan, the OEC will be a new agency with all of the authority and responsibilities of other state agencies. The OEC will lead to increased efficiency and responsiveness, a more focused policy agenda, the capability for a unified data system and consequent accountability. The result will mean consistent quality standards and requirements, and a coordinated mechanism for accessing information.

According to the Governor’s proposal, the OEC will bring together programs from five different agencies – State Department of Education (SDE), Department of Social Services (DSS), Board of Regents (BOR), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), and Department of Public Health (DPH). It will be assigned to SDE for administrative purposes only, meaning SDE will coordinate with the OEC to manage the new agency’s personnel, fiscal, legal, and information technology needs.

Legislative approval is required to create the Office of Early Childhood. In the event of its passage, implementation will occur in two phases between July 1, 2013 and July 1, 2014. Staggering the OEC’s implementation in two phases over one year enables the new agency to account for the complexity of consolidating multiple programs without weakening the intended impact of such a move. Programs from SDE, DSS, and BOR will move in Phase I; while programs in DPH, DDS, and one additional program in SDE and DSS each will move in Phase II. A total of approximately 95 state employees will transition into the OEC during this time, with roughly 30 employees moving in Phase I and the remaining 65 moving in Phase II.

The Office of Early Childhood Planning is currently working with teams from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), the Office of Labor Relations (OLR), and the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to ensure a smooth transition should the legislature vote to create the OEC. Numerous state employees are devoted to planning for this transition with the clear understanding that the OEC may not become a reality. As arduous as this planning process is, the teams that have come together recognize that it is better to prepare for something that may never come into existence than for July 1, 2013 to arrive without a plan to maintain services for children and families. The central focus of implementation planning is to ensure that there will be neither interruption of services for children and families nor delay of payment to providers during the transition.

The move to create the Office of Early Childhood is bold. Connecticut will join the ranks of a handful of states – Massachusetts, Washington, and Georgia – that lead the nation with truly comprehensive early childhood systems. Bold it may be, but Connecticut’s move toward creation of the OEC is good policy. A unified vision for early childhood leads to better outcomes for children, improved communication with parents, higher standards for providers, and more effective decision making by policymakers.

## II. Introduction

### A. The Importance of Early Childhood and a System

The scientific evidence is clear – investing in the wellbeing of young children lays the foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society. Across the country states are working to align programs and policies for children to realize the promise of this science. The report that follows is a bold proposal that would bring Connecticut's state governance structure for early childhood programs in line with cutting edge thinking concerning the science of child development.

In 2007 the Harvard Center on the Developing Child prepared a summary of the science of early children to guide policy makers. Drawing widely from the fields of neuroscience and developmental-behavioral research, this panel of experts concluded that “early experience determines whether a child’s developing brain architecture provides a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health.” (*A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy*, p. 3)

The science of child development confirms:

- Experiences in first five years of life impact outcomes later in childhood and into adulthood

The Perry Preschool project demonstrated long term benefits to children who have experienced a quality preschool program. Advantages went beyond academic performance, impacting their economic and social wellbeing at ages 27 and 40. (See Figure 1)

- All aspects of young children’s development are interrelated and are inseparable from the wellbeing of the family

For young children in particular it is not possible to promote intellectual growth without taking into account health and mental health. Services directed to children at this age are necessarily comprehensive.

#### Effective Early Childhood Policies are Grounded in Science

*“By creating and implementing effective early childhood programs and policies, society can ensure that children have a solid foundation for a productive future. Four decades of evaluation research have identified innovative programs that can improve a wide range of outcomes with continued impact into the adult years. Effective interventions are grounded in neuroscience and child development research and guided by evidence regarding what works for what purpose. With careful attention to quality and continuous improvement, such programs can be cost-effective and produce positive outcomes for children.”*

A policy brief of:

- NGA Center for Best Practices
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- Harvard University’s Center for the Developing Child

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu>

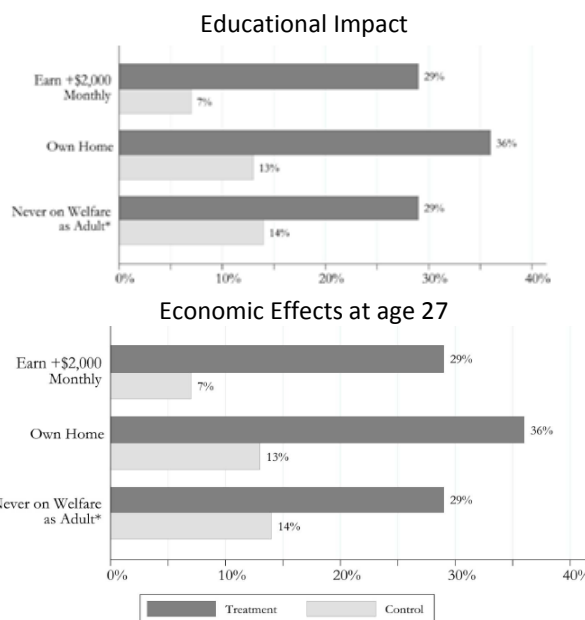
In addition effective early childhood services address the needs of parents as well as children. The impact of family socioeconomic factors even before age three is evidenced in the limited vocabularies of children in low-income families (see Figure 2). This two-generational focus is a central and unique aspect of early childhood services.

- Prevention and early intervention is more effective and cost efficient than later remediation

“Ensuring that children have positive experiences prior to entering school is likely to lead to better outcomes than remediation programs at a later age, and significant up-front costs can generate a strong return on investment.” (*A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy*)

The cost effectiveness of a strong early childhood strategy is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 1: Impact of Quality Preschool (treatment group) versus no Preschool (control group) (Perry Preschool Project)

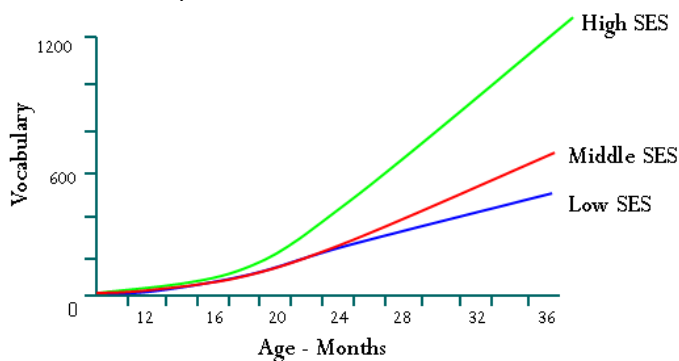


### Policy Implications

The policy implications of the science of child development are also evident. It is in the state’s interest to ensure that families have access to the services they require to support the comprehensive

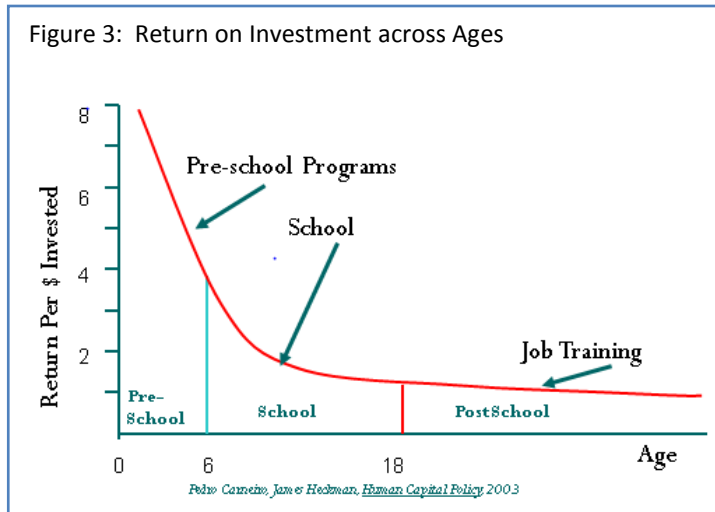
developmental needs of their young children. The cross-disciplinary nature of these services has led policy experts to propose state governance models that integrate funding streams and programs typically administered by separate state agencies, such as education, health, and social services. The report that follows describes the current early childhood “non-system” as it exists now in Connecticut. It proposes a bold new governance model, creating a new interdisciplinary agency that aligns policy and science

Figure 2. Differences in Vocabulary Growth in first 3 years as a function of Family’s Socio-economic Status



B. Hunt & T. Risley Meaningful Differences in Everyday Experiences of Young American Children 1995

Figure 3: Return on Investment across Ages



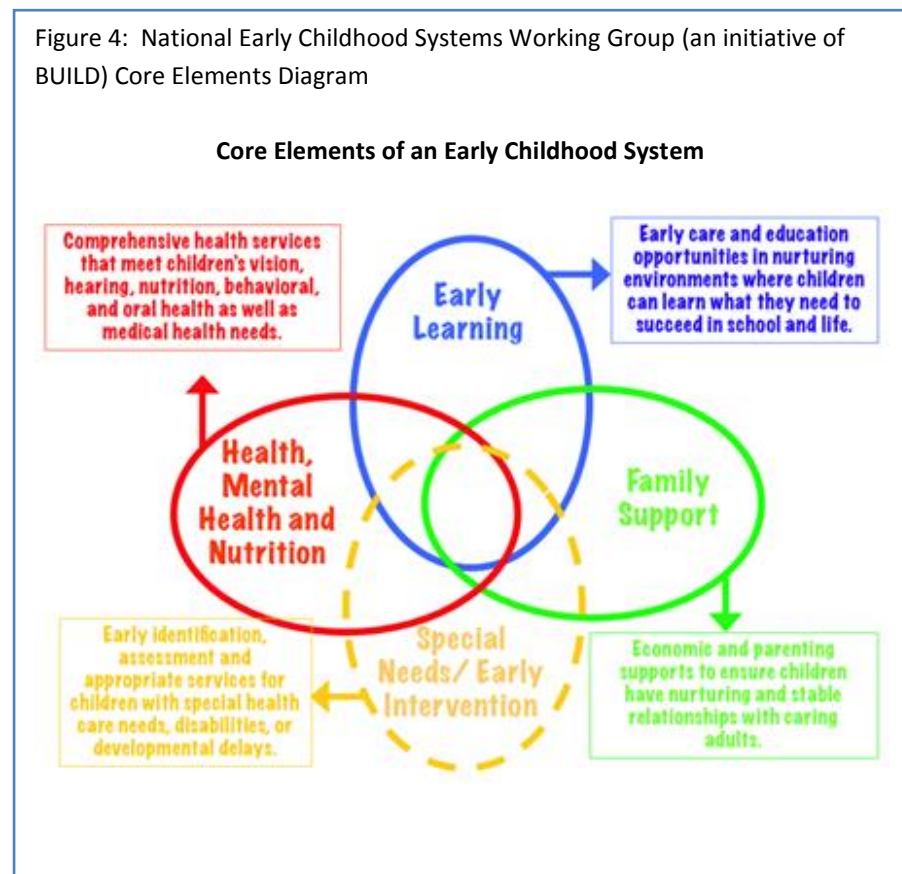
and oversees the state's investment in young children. This proposal has been guided by the work of experts from the BUILD Initiative, who have supported other states in creating more effective early childhood governance models. A comprehensive early childhood system includes four core elements--early learning; family support; special needs and early intervention; and health, mental health and nutrition (see Figure 4). BUILD's experience with other states has demonstrated that successful

governance structures require the unwavering support of the Governor, a clear policy direction from the legislature, and a strong early childhood leader who has budgetary and policy control over key early childhood programs and funding streams. When these factors are in place, a unified early childhood governance structure can provide the state with:

1. Coordination across programs and services
2. Alignment to promote all aspects of child development
3. Efficiency which avoids duplication and provides better value
4. Accountability for quality, equity and results

Most importantly, a coordinated system will provide children and families with consistent and readily available information, clear quality standards, and improved access to comprehensive services. Access to higher quality early childhood programs will provide a solid foundation for Connecticut's children.

Figure 4: National Early Childhood Systems Working Group (an initiative of BUILD) Core Elements Diagram



## B. The Charge from the Legislature

In 2011 the Connecticut legislature passed Public Act 11-181 (see appendix A), landmark legislation calling for an Early Childhood System in Connecticut that would integrate Connecticut's early childhood programs and services. In the spring of 2012 Governor Malloy appointed an Early Childhood Planning Director, Dr. Myra Jones-Taylor, to lead the Early Childhood Planning Team in the design of an Early Childhood System that would improve the delivery of services to the state's youngest children and their families. The addition of two part-time consultants, Dr. Carlota Schechter and Mara Siladi, completed the three-member Team that began working in May of 2012.

### Vision

A coordinated system of programs and policies aimed at promoting optimal growth and development of all children in Connecticut during the early childhood period (birth to age five).

## C. Vision and Guiding Principles

Taking guidance from the legislation, the Early Childhood Planning Team envisioned an Early Childhood System as a coordinated system of programs and policies aimed at promoting optimal growth and development of all children in the early childhood period. With that end goal in mind, the Team adopted a set of child- and family-centered guiding values and principles for which were developed by the national Early Childhood Systems Working Group and added several of their own to reflect Connecticut's commitment to research-based practices and central role of local community in early childhood systems.

### Guiding Values and Principles

- Reach all children and families, and as early as possible, with needed services and supports;
- Ease access for families and transitions for children;
- Value parents as decision makers and leaders;
- Ensure stability and continuity of services along a continuum from prenatal into school entry and beyond;
- Genuinely include and effectively accommodate children with special needs;
- Reflect and respect the strengths, needs, values, languages, languages, cultures of children and families; and
- Catalyze and maximize investment and foster innovation.
- Honor the individual strengths and knowledge of local communities
- Reflect current science, research, and evidence-based practices

## D. Information Gathering

### Planning Team's Outreach Efforts

In the late spring of 2012 the Planning Team initiated a multi-pronged information gathering process that included:

- Extensive phone and on-site consultation with experts from The BUILD Initiative, national leaders in early childhood systems building, and the federal Office of Child Care
- Interagency commissioners meetings organized by the Governor's office and attended by the Director of the Office of Early Childhood Planning, the Governor's Policy Director, the Commissioners of the Departments of Education, Children and Families, Social Services, and Public Health, the Undersecretary of Poverty Policy and the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management
- A listening tour with Connecticut stakeholder groups that engaged all sectors of the early care and education field; non-profit organizations representing community and economic development, mental health, health, education, and social services; business leaders; and philanthropy.
- A survey of over 3,000 parents conducted out of the Governor's office
- A series of parent forums reaching approximately 200 parents across the state coordinated by Connecticut Parent Power and the Commission on Children
- On-site visits to local early childhood programs and services

#### **Planning Team's Listening Tours**

- Expert national consultants
- National leaders
- Parent groups
- Regional organizations
- State Wide organizations
- Local community councils/  
Discovery groups
- Early care and education  
providers
- State wide public and private  
comprehensive service  
providers
- Cabinet Leadership Team and  
workgroups
- Funder stakeholder groups
- State agency partners
- Higher education partners
- Business leaders

When meeting with stakeholders and parents, the members of the Early Childhood Planning Team focused the conversation on three topics:

1. What is working in the current early childhood system that you would not want to lose?
2. What is not working that you would like to see changed?
3. What is your vision for an Early Childhood System for Connecticut?

The key messages conveyed on the Listening Tour and Parent Forums can be found in the text box. The results of the Parent Outreach Initiative are summarized in Appendix A.



### Key Points Raised in Listening Tours & Parent Forums

- Parents do not want to lose access to child care subsidies
- Community councils do not want to lose autonomy
- Parents would like easier access to information on services, information on the comparative quality of programs, and information about transitions from preschool to the public schools
- Center-based early care and education providers would like more streamlined reporting requirements and a licensing system that is supportive and focused on child development rather than punitive and focused on compliance.
- Home-based family child care providers would like access to professional development and to be part of a Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Communities would like readily available and accurate data
- Some communities feel disconnected from the home visiting program selection process and would like home visiting to be fully integrated into their local early childhood delivery system.

### Connecticut-based Research Provided by National Consultants

Consultants from the BUILD Initiative, whose services were made possible through the generous support of the CT Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, conducted research and interviews to inform the Office of Early Childhood Planning. They prepared two reports based on their findings:

- “Developing an Early Childhood Governance Structure: Key Considerations for Connecticut,” an analysis of early childhood systems building efforts in other states (see Appendix B).
- “Key Themes Report: Interviews with Connecticut Key Informants Regarding Early Care and Education System Improvement,” a summary of key points from a series of confidential interviews with more than 40 Connecticut stakeholders, including agency Commissioners and leaders outside of state government (see Appendix C).

The plan outlined in this document for an early childhood governance structure is based on the results of these intensive information gathering efforts.

#### The BUILD Initiative

“The BUILD Initiative helps participating states build a coordinated system of programs, policies and services—a comprehensive early learning system—that is responsive to the needs of families, careful in the use of private and public resources, and effective in preparing our youngest children for a successful future, including school readiness.”

[www.buildinitiative.org](http://www.buildinitiative.org)

### III. Early Childhood in Connecticut

#### A. Historical Context

The goal of creating an Early Childhood System in Connecticut is not new. In 2002 the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau provided funding for states to develop plans for an early childhood system of services that included family-centered access to health, socio-emotional health, early care and education, parenting education, and family support services. As a result the Connecticut Early Childhood Partners initiative brought together eight state agencies and statewide institutions, under the leadership of the Department of Public Health, to create a Strategic Plan to meet the needs of all families so their children arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.

This work continued with the establishment of an Early Childhood Cabinet in 2005. The cabinet created a strong vision for Connecticut's youngest children – Ready by 5, Fine by 9 – and identified three goals to reach this vision. The Research and Policy Council prepared a framework for the fiscal 2008 and 2009 state budget years, outlining 50 action steps required to meet these goals. The state budget was generous to early childhood and movement was made on individual action items. However, services for young children were distributed across many different agencies and the Cabinet lacked the authority to direct and coordinate the work of these various agencies in order to fully realize its goals.

During the same period the federal government once again encouraged states to coordinate early childhood services. In 2007 federal funding for early childhood became contingent upon the development of cross-sector State Advisory Councils. Four years later the federal Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services teamed up to create the Early Learning Challenge, a special Race to the Top competition focused on early childhood system development. Connecticut reorganized the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and, using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), established work groups to address the federal goal of early childhood system development. The new Cabinet, now guided by the federal funding requirements, reorganized its efforts towards goals outlined in the federal Head Start Act of 2007.

Through the labors of the many dedicated members of

#### Ready by 5 and Fine by 9

“To help ensure that all of the state’s young children, regardless of where they live, are ‘Ready by 5 and Fine by 9,’ the Cabinet proposes **three goals** for the children of the State of Connecticut, to:

- reach appropriate developmental milestones from birth to age 5;
- begin kindergarten with the knowledge, skills and behaviors needed for success in school; and
- have K-3 education experiences that extend children’s birth-to-5 learning and ensure consistent progress in achieving reading mastery.”

*Connecticut’s Early Childhood  
Investment Framework,  
October 2006*

its workgroups the Cabinet made progress on:

- Developing early learning standards;
- Conceptualizing a coordinated data system;
- Promoting a coordinated system of family involvement and home visitation;
- Improving the professional development of the early childhood workforce; and
- Developing a model for a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System

Despite these efforts, this Cabinet is also limited in its role. The Cabinet does not have the authority to ensure that activities across agencies are coordinated. For example, a Bureau Chief at the State Department of Education, co-chairs the Early Learning Standards workgroup, and so was in a position to align the early childhood standards with the k-12 standards.

However, the Cabinet does not have the influence to ensure that the new standards form the basis of state early childhood programs in other agencies such as: the Birth-to-Three program in the Department of Developmental Services, home visiting programs in the Departments of Health and Social Services, or child care programs licensed by the Department of Health.

In summary, the current Cabinet, as the one before, has made progress in moving Connecticut towards a more coordinated state level early childhood system. However, these gains have been dependent to a great extent on the good will of the individuals involved in this work. The Cabinet is not empowered to require coordinated efforts among state agencies and thus progress is hard won, incomplete, and difficult to sustain. In short, the Cabinet is not substitute for an effective, accountable Early Childhood System.

#### Federal Funding

In 2011 a coalition of Connecticut early childhood experts prepared a comprehensive application for the federal Early Learning Challenge grant, which involved gathering information from many agencies across the state. Despite this wide-ranging effort, Connecticut was not among the first group of nine states to be funded or the second group of five states selected in 2012. The federal government is looking to states to integrate early childhood services supported through four different federal funding streams:

- Child Care Development Fund
- Head Start Collaboration
- Home Visiting
- Part C of IDEA.

#### **Early Childhood Education Cabinet 4 Priority Areas**

- Quality Data Systems
- Early Learning Standards
- Family Involvement/ Home Visiting
- Professional Development/Workforce

Addressing these four priorities will assist Connecticut in meeting the responsibilities of the Cabinet as stated in the Head Start Act of 2007.

States that were successful in the Early Learning Challenge competition have created governance structures that allow them to do this. Two of the first round winners, Massachusetts and Washington, created separate state agencies that consolidated all of their early childhood programs. The other seven states funded in round one direct their federal early childhood funds to a small number of state agencies so as to integrate federal and state funding streams more effectively. (See Appendix B for a full comparison of how each of the states manages early childhood federal funding streams.) In Connecticut, each of the four major sources of federal funds for early childhood services are managed by a separate state agency without an overarching mechanism for coordination. The following plan would bring these funding streams into one state agency in order to maximize the effectiveness of this federal investment on behalf of Connecticut's children.

**Figure 5: Connecticut Agencies Receiving Federal Funds for Early Childhood Programs**

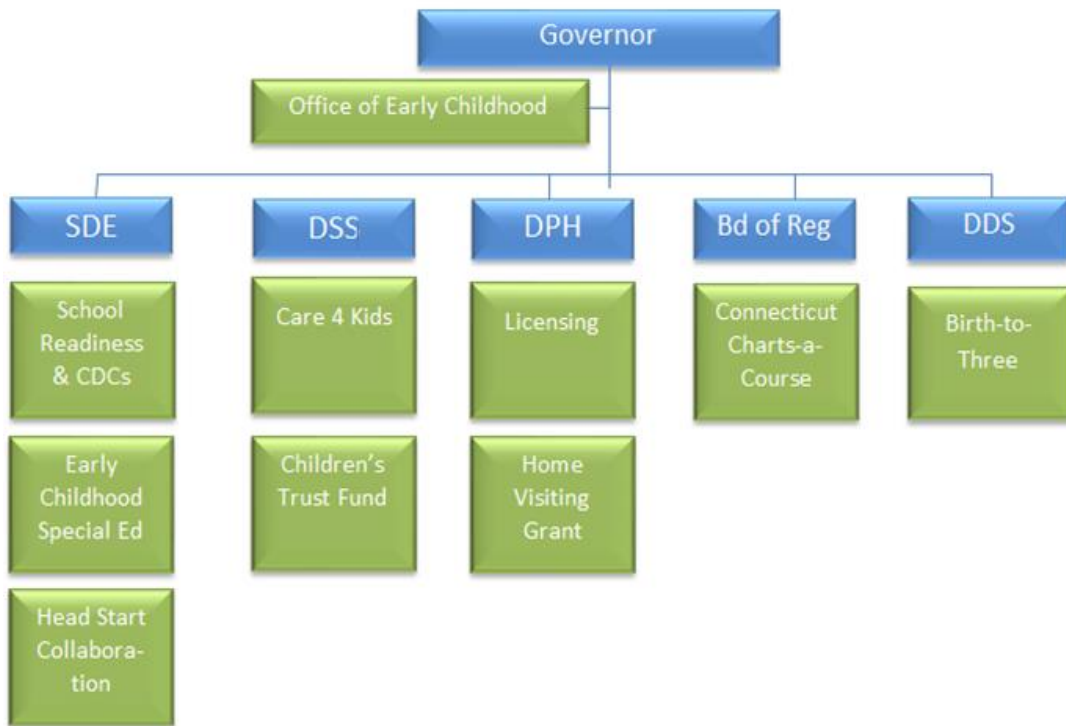
<b>Federal Funding for Early Childhood</b>	<b>CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT FUND (CCDF)</b>	<b>HEAD START COLLABORATION</b>	<b>HOME VISITING (MIECHV)</b>	<b>PART C (IDEA)</b>
<b>Receiving agency In Connecticut (4 different agencies)</b>	Department of Social Services*	Department of Education	Department of Public Health	Department of Developmental Services

\* Then distributed to DPH for child care licensing and Board of Regents for professional development.

## B. Current state programs

The four state agencies that receive federal funding for early childhood (DSS, SDE, DPH and DDS) are not the only state agencies in which early childhood services reside in Connecticut. An office within the Board of Regents delivers professional development and program improvement services for early care and education programs across the state. Besides the Department of Children and Families (DCF) which provides child welfare programs and services for our most at risk young children, five different state agencies manage early childhood programs as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Connecticut Agencies with Early Childhood Services**



### Challenges of a Non-System for Early Childhood

Early childhood is a small part of each of these larger agencies and the early childhood services are often aligned more closely with the broader mission of the agency rather than with a single vision consistent with the needs of young children and their families. It is difficult to implement a coordinated vision for these services as long as they are spread across different agencies and no single agency is held accountable for young children's healthy development. Furthermore, it is challenging to identify gaps, duplications, or redundancies in the state services offered. Collecting accurate and timely data is an incredible challenge when early childhood data is distributed across multiple agencies, as

#### **States across the Country have "Non-systems" for Early Childhood Services**

*"Tax-payer funded early care and education has grown dramatically in recent years, resulting in a multiplicity of programs and funding streams at the federal, state and local levels. Each has its own mission, regulatory requirements, and constituency. Taken together, they form what has been called a "patchwork quilt" or "non-system" of early care and education. They are seldom coordinated with each other, the result being that opportunities to broadly raise program quality and access, work collaboratively to gain efficiencies, and otherwise maximize the public's investment are invariably lost."*

NIEER Policy Brief April 2011, Issue 23  
"Improving Public Financing for Early Learning Programs"

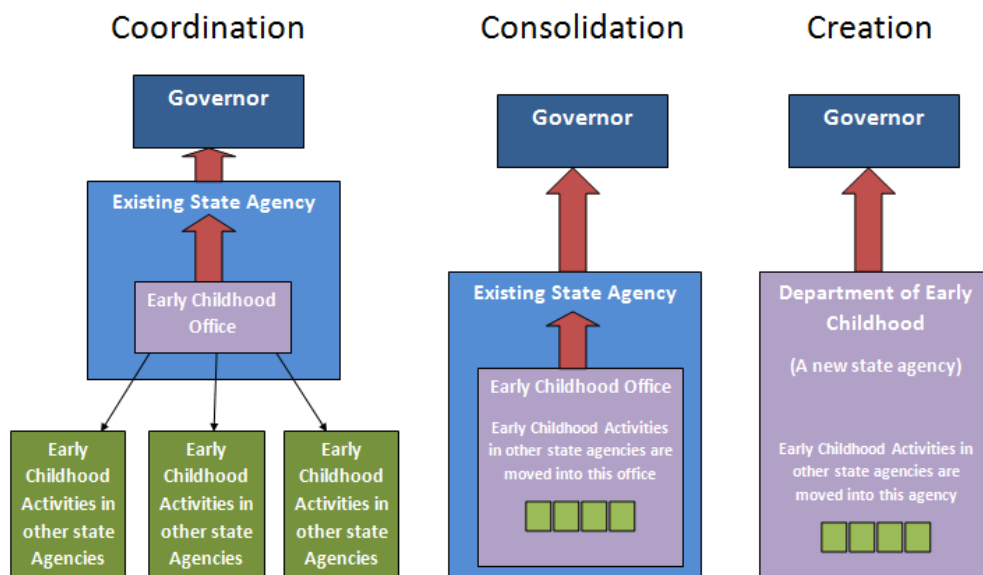
it is with our current early childhood system. The state has no way to know if the same child is receiving services from multiple agencies and, consequently, no way to know if the state is providing that child with an effective combination of services that would lead to her optimal growth and development.

Most importantly, families find it difficult to access information about services for their children. This is particularly a challenge considering that the needs of young children and their families are necessarily interconnected and cannot be neatly parsed as health, social or educational in the same manner in which our current early childhood service delivery system exists. Early childhood services are distinctive from the services offered by other agencies in that education, social development, and physical and mental health are interdependent during this developmental period and thus early childhood programs involve services for children as well as their parents.

### C. National Models

Connecticut is not alone in these challenges. Other states have identified a similar lack of coordination when it comes to early childhood services and have addressed this with a variety of governance models. Increasingly, with incentives from federal grant programs that promote early childhood system building and technical support and guidance from national early childhood experts, states are moving to consolidate early childhood services. Interestingly, there is not a single early childhood governance structure that works best for every state. The BUILD Initiative has identified three different forms of early childhood governance found in states across the country: creation, consolidation, and coordination.

**Figure 7: Three Early Childhood Governance Models**



In the **coordination** model, individual agencies coordinate early childhood programs and services among

each other, with each agency maintaining authority over and accountability for their respective programs and services. Connecticut's current early childhood programs could be considered a loose coordination model.

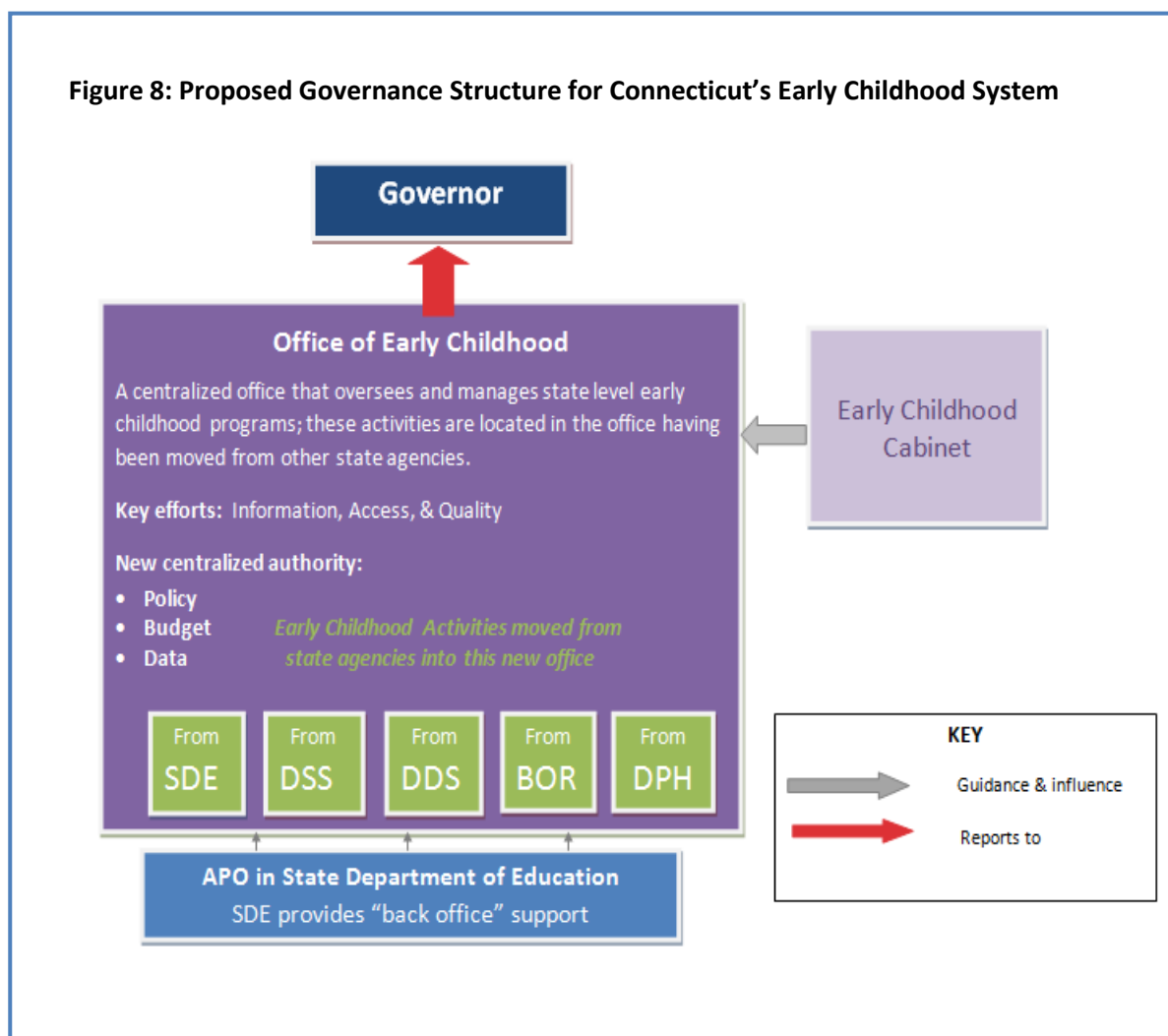
In the **consolidation** model, states create a centralized office focused on early childhood that resides within another agency, often state departments of education or social services. The benefit of this model is the ability to consolidate programs without the significant costs of operating an entirely separate agency. The risk this model presents is that the early childhood vision and mission become secondary to or subsumed by the agenda of the larger host agency.

In the **creation** model, states create a new agency entirely devoted to early childhood. This model eliminates the silos that hamper the efficiency and efficacy of early childhood service delivery. Moreover, the creation of one agency devoted to early childhood services elevates the stature of early childhood policy and the importance of quality early childhood programs in the lives of children. This model is the most costly of the three due to the costs incurred when creating a new agency that requires its own human resources, legal, fiscal, information technology staff. (See Appendix B for a full description of the three early childhood governance models.)

#### IV. Proposed Governance Model for Connecticut – The Office of Early Childhood

After an intensive eight-month planning process, the Office of Early Childhood Planning recommended to Governor Malloy a hybrid early childhood governance structure combining advantages of the creation and consolidation models. According to the Governor’s proposal, a new Office of Early Childhood will consolidate all early childhood funding streams and programs currently dispersed across the Departments of Developmental Services, Education, Public Health, Social Services and the Board of Regents, allowing for a concerted focus on the “Ready by 5” goal for children through a unified policy, budget and data system. As a result, state services will be more effective and efficient, and families will have access to quality services and information.

**Figure 8: Proposed Governance Structure for Connecticut’s Early Childhood System**





Consistent with the creation model, the proposed Office of Early Childhood will be a new state agency with the full authority of all other state agencies and it will report directly to the Governor. However, in this proposal the OEC will be assigned to SDE for Administrative Purposes Only (APO). The State Department of Education will provide “back office” support services such as human resources, fiscal, legal, and information technology to the OEC. This maintains the advantages of the creation model while eliminating the expense of duplicating support services. The Connecticut statute on Administrative Purposes Only provides for this possibility and clearly stipulates that the nested agency has complete authority over its own functions, budget, personnel and contracts.

### **A. Programs to be Moved**

After careful analysis the Office of Early Childhood Planning identified state agency programs that are primarily focused on services to children from birth to age five. The following early childhood programs which have been housed in five separate state agencies will be brought together in this new Office of Early Childhood:

1. Board of Regents
  - a. Connecticut Charts-a-Course
2. Department of Developmental Services
  - a. Birth-to-Three
3. Department of Education
  - a. Early Learning and Development (including School Readiness, Child Development Centers, and Head Start)
  - b. Early Childhood Special Education
4. Department of Health
  - a. Child Day Care Licensing
  - b. Home Visiting Grant
5. Department of Social Services
  - a. Care 4 Kids
  - b. Contract with United Way Connecticut for Child Development 211 Infoline
  - c. Children’s Trust Fund

#### **Administrative Purposes Only**

“An agency assigned to a department for administrative purposes only shall:

- (1) Exercise any quasi-judicial, rule-making or regulatory authority, licensing and policy-making functions which it may have independent of such department and without approval or control of the department;
- (2) prepare its budget, if any, and submit its budgetary requests through the department; and
- (3) hire its own personnel or enter into contracts, if authorized by law, or if the general assembly provides or authorizes the expenditure of funds therefor.”

**CT General Statute – Section 4-38f**

The Office of Early Childhood will also subsume the positions currently devoted to early childhood programs and services in DDS, DPH, DSS, SDE and BOR. The programs to be moved from each agency are outlined in Figure 9.

The Early Childhood Planning Team recognizes that a few other early childhood related programs will remain in other agencies with this plan, for example the State Department of Education's Family Resource Centers, or the Department of Children and Families' contracts with Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP) and Child FIRST. It is recommended that these programs remain in their current agencies until further planning and assessment can be made as to the best administrative oversight arrangement. In addition, it is generally agreed that, developmentally, the early childhood period continues until age eight or third grade. An important responsibility of the new agency will be to ensure tight collaboration with early primary education policies and programs at the State Department of Education, and with agencies that provide services that span the age continuum such as the Departments of Children and Families, Social Services and Public Health. This will be one of the foci of the new Cabinet which will include the Commissioners of these agencies as members.

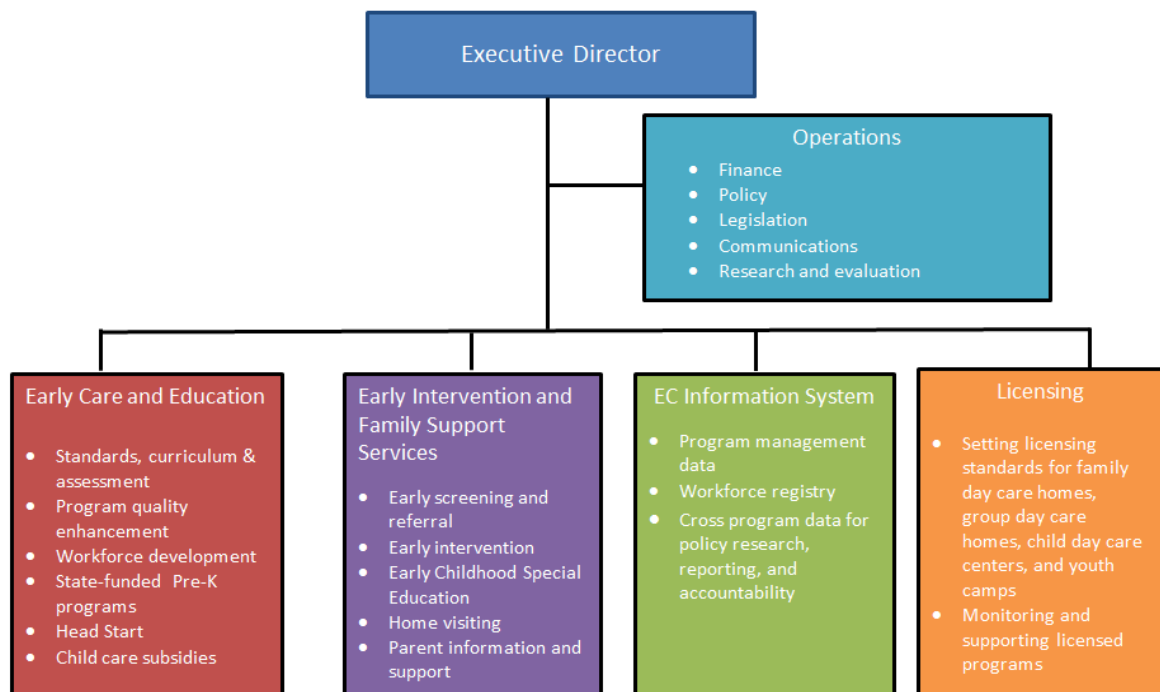
## **B. A Proposed Administrative Structure**

The proposed Office of Early Childhood will be overseen by an Executive Director to be appointed by the Governor. The Executive Director will serve as the head of the agency, in accordance with provisions of Connecticut General Statute sections 4-5 to 4-8, inclusive, with all of the authority and responsibilities of Commissioners and other agency heads. In addition the Governor's budget calls for three new full-time employees. Key activities of the proposed new agency include providing unified data, policy, and budgetary oversight of early childhood activities. With this in mind Figure 10 depicts a proposed organizational structure for the Office.

**Figure 9: Early Childhood Activities to be moved from other Connecticut State Agencies**

Board of Regents	
Connecticut Charts-a-Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development for ECE staff</li> <li>Career counseling for ECE staff</li> <li>Scholarship assistance</li> <li>Training Program in Child Development</li> <li>Approval system for trainers</li> <li>Support for program administrators to obtain CT Directors' Credential</li> </ul>
CCAC Registry for ECE Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personnel database of early childhood professionals</li> <li>Verification of Head Teacher status for DPH licensing</li> <li>Candidacy calculator for NAEYC accreditation</li> </ul>
CCAC Accreditation Facilitation Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical assistance and support for early childhood programs seeking NAEYC Accreditation</li> </ul>
Department of Developmental Services	
Connecticut Birth-to-Three System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services to meet the health-related and developmental needs of infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities</li> </ul>
Department of Public Health	
Child Day Care Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Community Based Regulation (CBR) Section is responsible for the administration of the child day care and youth camp licensing programs at the Department of Public Health</li> <li>Assures that family day care homes, group day care homes and child day care centers operate at or above the required standards established by state statutes and regulations</li> </ul>
Home Visitation ( MIECHV Grant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes several service strategies embedded in a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system</li> <li>Promotes maternal, infant, and early childhood health &amp; development; relies on the best available research evidence to inform practice</li> </ul>
Department of Social Services	
Nurturing Families Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides screening and assessment, group support and intensive home visiting for new parents who are at high risk for child abuse and neglect</li> </ul>
Help Me Grow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Links child health providers, parents and service providers with existing community-based resources and services through a toll-free telephone number and care coordination</li> </ul>
Care 4 Kids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make child care affordable for low-to-moderate income families in CT</li> <li>Contracted services provided through United Way 211 Child Care Infoline</li> </ul>
State Department of Education	
Bureau of Teaching and Learning Early Childhood Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management of the School Readiness Program, Child Development Centers, and the state Head Start grant</li> <li>Early childhood workforce development</li> <li>Early care and education program support</li> </ul>
Early Childhood Special Education (IDEA Part B – 619)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assures compliance with Special Education and related services as required by federal and state law</li> <li>Ensures that young children with disabilities are provided a free and appropriate public education in accordance with their individual needs</li> <li>Early childhood special education as defined by IDEA is for 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children with disabilities who require special education</li> </ul>

**Figure 10: Proposed Administrative Structure for the New Office of Early Childhood**



### C. The Early Childhood Cabinet

The current Early Childhood Education Cabinet is proposed to be reorganized and named the Early Childhood Cabinet. In its new capacity, the primary purpose of the Early Childhood Cabinet, which will meet quarterly, will be threefold: (1) to make policy recommendations for an effective and cohesive early childhood system, and (2) to provide close coordination with other state agencies, and (3) to outline annual action plans and strategic reports to the Governor. The Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood will co-chair the Cabinet. The second co-chair will rotate among the membership which will primarily include the Commissioners of the Departments of Education, Social Services, Public Health, and Developmental Services, the President of Board of Regents, and the Director of the proposed Institute (see below). In addition, the Cabinet will continue to serve as the federally required State Advisory Council and will thus include a members representing of local educational agencies, local providers of early childhood education services, Head Start, and the director of the Head Start Collaboration.

As the new Office of Early Childhood is configured it will be essential to consider the very important work that has been done by the working groups of the current Early Childhood Education Cabinet. In some cases this work will now be able to be carried on within the new agency, and the working group may play an advisory role. Decisions about how this new governance structure impacts the work and the on-going role of each of the working groups will be made on a case by case basis.

### D. Connecticut Early Childhood Innovation and Investment Institute (CECI<sup>3</sup>)

As it shaped its plan for a Connecticut Early Childhood governance system, the Early Childhood Planning Team knew that it had the opportunity to truly revolutionize the way Connecticut approaches early childhood. Acknowledging that preparing young children for success in school is of interest to both the state and private sector, the Planning Team proposes the development of a private institute that will work hand-in-hand with the Office of Early Childhood. Such a partnership will facilitate public-private collaborations and investments. After all, some tasks are better performed by a state agency, others by private entities.

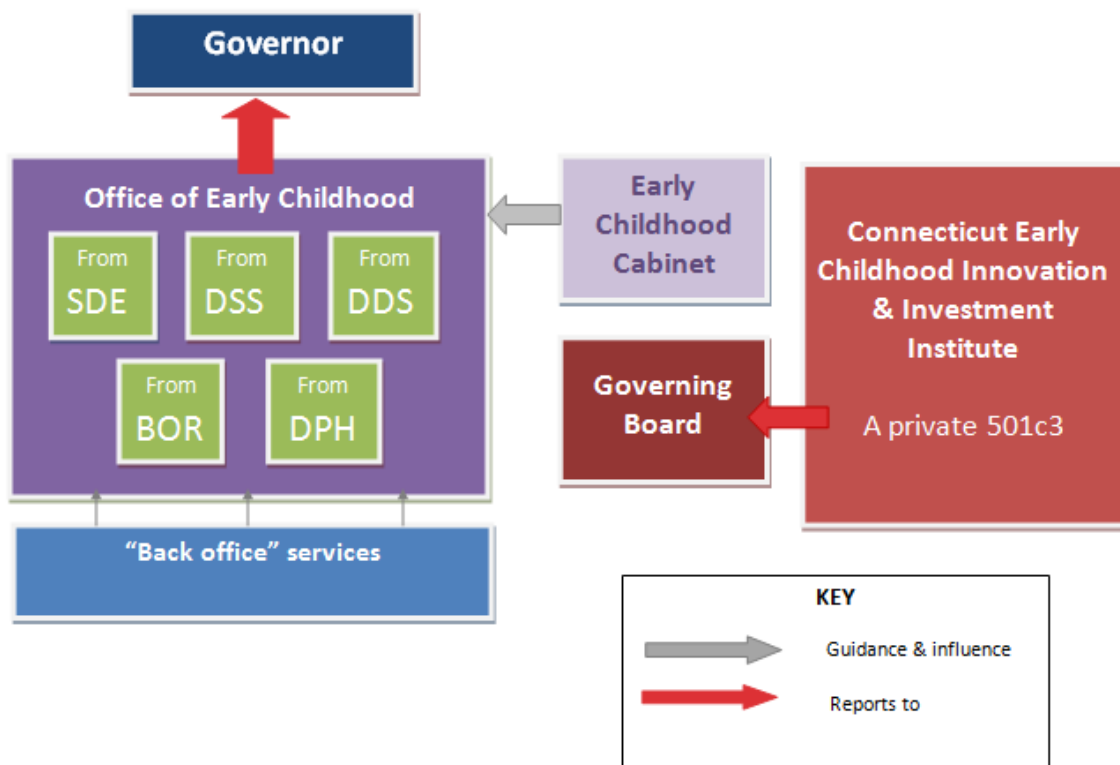
#### Early Childhood Cabinet Members

Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood  
Commissioner of Education  
Commissioner of Social Services  
President of Board of Regents  
Commissioner of Public Health  
Commissioner of Developmental Services  
Commissioner of Children and Families  
Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management  
Project Director of Head Start Collaboration  
Parent of School Readiness child  
Local early childhood education provider  
Representative of a LEA in an Alliance district  
Parent of child attending elementary school in an Alliance district  
Member of the House of Representatives  
Member of the Senate  
Representative of Head Start Association  
Representative of the business or philanthropic community

The proposed Connecticut Early Childhood Innovation and Investment Institute (CECI<sup>3</sup>) will focus key efforts on launching innovation in Connecticut's early childhood sphere, policy research and development, advocacy, public relations and fund raising and grant procurement. In addition, the CECI<sup>3</sup> will oversee and support Local Early Childhood Councils, which in turn will focus on planning and coordination of programs; developing and maintaining inventories of local programs and services; and coordinating with Child Development Infoline and Help Me Grow to provide information and referral services to families.

To solidify this public-private partnership, the Planning Office proposes a Governing Board to oversee the Institute, with the goal of directly involving researchers, business leaders, and philanthropy. The Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood should be a member of this Board in order to insure coordination between the public and private components of the system. The relationship between the Office of Early Childhood, the new Institute, and its board are shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Connecticut's Early Childhood System with Proposed Public Component**



## **E. Other Partners**

In addition to the Connecticut Early Childhood Innovation and Investment Institute, the Office of Early Childhood will continue to rely on the support and counsel of a variety of partners, including; United Way of Connecticut, Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC), Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), and the State Education Resource Center (SERC).

As a long-standing early childhood resource in the state, the United Way of Connecticut will continue to partner with the OEC to provide services through its Child Development Infoline, Care 4 Kids, and 2-1-1 Child Care. 2-1-1 will continue to house a comprehensive registry of programs, information for families regarding child care, and assistance to child care providers.

SERC, which is largely funded by the State Department of Education, will continue to provide professional development and information dissemination in the latest research and best practices to early childhood educators, service providers and families throughout the state, as well as job-embedded technical assistance and training within schools and programs. By the same token RESCs will continue to provide cost-efficient, cooperative early childhood initiatives to support young children and their families through curriculum development and assessment, professional development, special education services, among other services. On the policy front, CAEYC and its local chapters will continue to provide training for early childhood professionals and to promote early childhood competencies through support and advocacy.

## V. Planning for Implementation

Legislative approval is required to create the Office of Early Childhood. According to Governor Malloy's proposal, the OEC will come into existence July 1, 2013 should the legislation pass. In the event of its passage, implementation will occur in two phases between July 1, 2013 and July 1, 2014. The Office of Early Childhood Planning is currently working with teams from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), the Office of Labor Relations (OLR), and the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to ensure a smooth transition should the legislature vote to create the Office of Early Childhood.

Numerous state employees are devoted to planning for this transition with the clear understanding that the OEC may not become a reality. As arduous as this planning process is, the teams that have come together recognize that it is better to prepare for something that may never come into existence than for July 1, 2013 to arrive without a plan to maintain services for children and families.

***The primary goal of the initial part of the implementation process is to ensure that there will be neither any disruption of services for children and families, nor delayed payment for providers and contractors.*** As such, the current grants and contracts held by the programs to move during Phase I will be maintained in their extant form upon initial implementation of the Office of Early Childhood. Individual Memoranda of Agreement between the Office of Early Childhood and the Board of Regents, the State Department of Education, and the Department of Social Services will be created to allow those originating agencies to maintain existing contracts until the Office of Early Childhood has transitioned fully into the new contract management system.

The *ultimate* goal of the implementation of the OEC is to establish a new agency culture focused on the collective positive impact of early childhood programs on young children and families in Connecticut. Implementing the OEC will require thoughtful planning and intentional execution. Teams from OPM, OLR, and DAS, as well as BUILD consultants made possible by the generous support of the CT Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, have given invaluable guidance to ensure a successful implementation of the OEC. That guidance is the basis of the implementation planning process described below.

### A. A Two-phased Approach

The implementation of the Office of Early Childhood will occur in two phases spanning one full year, beginning July 1, 2013 and ending July 1, 2014. The Planning Team, in consultation with experts from BUILD who have created early childhood governance structures in other states, determined that a phased implementation process would be best for Connecticut. Consolidating all programs in one fell swoop would be overwhelming and could potentially undermine the goal of creating an efficient and effective early childhood system; ***however, extending the implementation period over a number of years would inhibit the development of a new agency culture that is crucial to successful system change.*** Staggering the OEC's implementation in two phases over one year enables the new agency to account for the complexity of consolidating multiple programs without weakening the intended impact of such a move (see Appendix D).



## Two Phases of Implementation

Implementation Phase	Agency	Programs to be Transferred to OEC
<b>Phase I-</b> To begin July 2013  Includes transfer of approximately 30 FTEs	SDE	School Readiness; Child Development Centers; Head Start Collaboration
	DSS	Care 4 Kids and the contract with United Way for 211 Childcare Infoline
	BOR	Connecticut Charts-A-Course
<b>Phase II-</b> To be completed no later than July 2014  Includes transfer of additional 65 FTEs	SDE	Early Childhood Special Education
	DDS	Birth to 3
	DSS	Childrens' Trust fund
	DPH	Child Day Care Licensing, Home Visiting (MIECHV Grant)

### B. Location

The Office of Early Childhood Planning is working with DAS and OPM to identify a state-owned property to accommodate the nearly 100 state employees who will move into the proposed OEC by the Phase II in July of 2014.

### C. Personnel

The seamless and thoughtful transfer of personnel into the Office of Early Childhood is critical to its success. The implementation process must be mindful of the stress state employees may feel in the face of change and the relative uncertainty of a new agency. It must value the contributions state employees made in their originating agencies while inspiring them to recognize the opportunity of being part of a new system committed to collective improvement and innovation on behalf of young children. Capacity building and the creation of a new agency culture will be key foci during the implementation process. Although the full implementation of the OEC will take an entire year, employees scheduled to move during Phases I and II will take part in capacity- and culture-building activities together commencing during Phase I.

The following is a list of the personnel related issues addressed in this process:

Human Resource Issues	Projected Responses
Bargaining Units, Classified State Employees, and Vacancies	State employees will remain in their respective bargaining units upon transfer to the OEC.
	Current state employees in BOR will be brought into the executive branch state system. OLR and DAS have experience with similar moves in the past and are working to ensure a smooth transition for BOR employees.
	DAS will evaluate current vacancies (and those subsequently created by retirement or departures from state government) in programs that will be moving to the OEC for their potential to be reclassified to serve the new functions of the OEC.
Retirement and Benefits	The retirement and benefit packages of state employees transferred from one executive branch agency to another will not be affected by the move to the OEC, which will be another executive branch agency.
	Retirement and benefit packages for state employees in the BOR differ from those in the executive branch; however, those state employees moving from the BOR to the OEC with more than five years of state employment will be able to maintain their current retirement and benefit packages if they so choose.
Four New FTE's	The Governor will appoint the agency head of the OEC (CSG sections 4-5 to 4-8, inclusive).
	The remaining three new positions will be posted and filled in accordance with state hiring procedures.

## D. Fiscal

Current grants and contracts held by the programs to move during Phase I will be maintained in their extant form during the initial implementation of the OEC. ***This is to ensure that there will be neither any disruption of services for children and families nor delayed payment for providers and contractors.***

Part of the Governor's proposal for the Office of Early Childhood is to have it be a part of a newly established contract management system with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. That agency is widely recognized as having an effective contract management system. By Phase II of the Office of Early Childhood implementation process all early childhood contracts in the new agency will be maintained and issued through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' contract management system. During Phase I, however, individual Memoranda of Agreement between the Office of Early Childhood and the Board of Regents, the State Department of Education, and the Department of Social Services will be created to allow those originating agencies to maintain existing contracts until the Office of Early Childhood has transitioned fully into the new contract management system. This process is to ensure that services and payment are not disrupted.

## E. Data and Information Technology (IT)

Connecticut does not have a centralized mechanism for collecting and managing early childhood data, commonly known as an Early Childhood Information System (ECIS). To the contrary, early childhood data is dispersed across at least six agencies and more than 25 associated databases, making data sharing incredibly challenging. Without an ECIS the state cannot make informed and effective early childhood policy, costing the state unnecessarily and hindering its ability to turn the curve in the lives of young children and their families. Young children receive multiple services, including early care and education, health, mental health, and home visiting from the state. Yet the state has no coordinated way to identify which children are receiving services and, as a result, no way to assess whether the services are making a positive difference in their lives. Complete and accurate data should be collected, linked to, and coordinated with the K-12 data system, in particular, so that quality assessments and longitudinal analyses of early care and education programs can be performed and student progress can be monitored.

One of the primary reasons for establishing the OEC is its ability to unify the early childhood data that is currently scattered across agencies, but this will not happen instantaneously with the consolidation of early childhood programs. Extensive data mapping and sophisticated programming is required to create an ECIS out of Connecticut's currently lacking early childhood data infrastructure. Fortunately, the legislature made technology bond funds available through OPM for such an endeavor during the 2012 legislative session. The Office of Early Childhood Planning, in concert with SDE's Bureau of Information Technology, is approaching the final stage of securing technology bond funds to develop an ECIS.

The following IT considerations are being made for the OEC in the interim:

Implementation Phase	Agency	Technology Concerns to be Addressed
<b><i>Phase I Technology Concerns</i></b>	SDE	Because the OEC will be assigned to SDE for administrative purposes only, which includes IT support, the data and IT transitions should be minimal during the initial implementation period.
	DSS	The United Way currently manages the vast majority of the data related to Care 4 Kids, therefore the data and IT transitions should also be minimal during the initial implementation period.
	BOR	CT Charts-A-Course (CCAC) maintains the workforce registry, the main data base for the state's early childhood workforce. An outside contractor currently maintains CCAC's data system. In accordance with CSG section 4-38d(d), the OEC may maintain that contract during the initial implementation period or for whatever duration deemed appropriate.
<b><i>Phase II Technology Concerns</i></b>	DDS	Birth-to-Three has one of the most robust and functional data systems among Connecticut's early childhood programs. By design, the implementation process allows for one year to plan to integrate this data system into the OEC.
	DPH	Most of DPH's data requiring integration relates to home visiting because child care licensing's data is primarily housed at BEST as part of its centralized e-licensing system. As of print, the home visiting programs funded by MIECHV have yet to begin data collection from grantees so there is an opportunity to plan for data integration near the outset. Here, too, the OEC will have one year to plan to integrate DPH's data into the OEC.

## VI. Conclusion

As a result of the planning process, the Planning Team recommends that the new Office of Early Childhood focus on the following priorities in the first two years:

- Build a child- and family-centered agency culture committed to excellence, innovation, and accountability
- Create outcomes-driven policy and programs
- Develop a comprehensive early childhood assessment system
- Align quality standards across all early care and education settings, including home-based programs

The Planning Office also recommends that the new Office of Early Childhood Planning create conditions to promote collective impact:

**Common Agenda:** shared understanding of the problem and the ultimate goal

**Shared Measurement Systems:** collective approach to measuring results and progress

**Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** coordination of goal-oriented activities across expertise and focus area

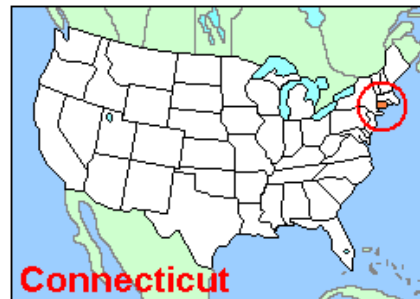
**Continuous Communication:** open, frequent and regular dialog rooted in a common language

**Backbone Support Organization:** collaboration with another entity whose sole purpose is to coordinate efforts and leverage impact (the Early Childhood Innovation and Investment Institute)

The move to create a free-standing Office of Early Childhood is bold. Only three other states (Massachusetts, Washington, and Georgia) have consolidated their early childhood services in one state agency devoted to early childhood. Moreover, the Connecticut model is more comprehensive than that of any other state including a fuller range of the services that children and families require starting at birth.

Bold it may be, but Connecticut's move toward creation of an Office of Early Childhood is good policy. A unified vision for early childhood leads to better outcomes for children, improved communication with parents, higher standards for providers, and more effective decision making by policymakers.

A Plan the puts Connecticut on the Map



*"Large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations. Substantially greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social problems if nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda to create collective impact."*

"Collective Impact," John Kania & Mark Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review.

