

OEC Parent Cabinet

What is the Parent Cabinet?

The Office of Early Childhood's Parent Cabinet is a diverse parent-led advisory group to OEC consisting of 15 members from across the state (based on DCF regions- 2 per region and 3 at large). The OEC Parent Cabinet provides the OEC with guidance to:

- Improve programs, policies, and legislation related to young children and their families
- Understand the needs of families from all backgrounds
- How OEC can form lasting and effective authentic partnerships with families

Mission

To build strong connections, listen intentionally, and partner with Connecticut families of young children, communities, and OEC to incorporate the expertise of all parents throughout the early childhood system to ensure family-driven equitable policies and programs.

Responsibilities, Requirements & Stipend

OEC provides a stipend to parent leaders to be compensated for their time and expertise.

- The OEC meets monthly- every 4th Tuesday virtually on zoom with OEC. These meetings are facilitated and led by the Parent Cabinet members, are attended by OEC Commissioner, staff, and invited guests.
- Over a year, members of the Parent Cabinet will spend an estimated 68 hours on these responsibilities work.
 - Monthly meetings
 - Monthly Subcommittee meetings
 - Quarterly meetings with full local ambassadors
 - Local community outreach
- They each receive a **\$25 an hour stipend for their responsibilities** within available funding. Members need to complete documentation to show the work they have done through a form they submit monthly to OEC. Prior to receiving any stipend payments, a W-9 must be filled out and submitted on an annual basis. In addition, Parent Cabinet members executed a Confidentiality Agreement and were reminded in that document of their responsibilities under the State Ethics Code.

History

- The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Parent Cabinet was co-created with a group of 10 parent leaders from across the state to form a Parent Cabinet Design Committee. They helped co-create the foundation of the Parent Cabinet and were on selection committees to select the first group of Parent cabinet members.
- The Design Committee researched and based their work on various models and approaches <https://www.ctoec.org/partnerships/parent-cabinet/parent-cabinet-history/>

Application & Selection Process

Parent Cabinet members were selected after an extensive process. The process included the following steps:

- Significant outreach to announce the opening of the written application portion of the process. This included two statewide information sessions, social media outreach, flyer distribution, and email outreach. Applications were open for 6 weeks, available in English and Spanish, and extensive information on the opportunity was available on the OEC website.
- 5 Selection Committees were established by geographic region.
 - The committees consisted of a OEC staff, community member, and parent leader from the Design committee. Each selection committee also had a facilitator who guided the whole process.
- Selection committees went through two training sessions to understand how to score the written applications using a rubric, and then how to score the interview process
- Written applications were ranked based on scores and the selection committees recommended their top eight candidates for their region for interviews.
- Interviews were then scheduled with each Selection Committee. A total of 43 interviews were conducted – several in Spanish.
- Following the interviews, the Selection Committees then debriefed together and moved forward their recommendation for their two Parent Cabinet members plus their one At-Large candidate.
- All recommendations were given to Commissioner Bye for approval, and Commissioner Bye approved the three At-Large candidates. The At-Large candidate selection was data-driven . Data taken into consideration included identifying At-Large candidates that met a need for the Cabinet (i.e., demographics, geographic representation, experience with OEC services, etc.)

Parent Cabinet Demographics data

The final make-up of the Cabinet consists of the following based on what they submitted in 2021 from their applications:

- Gender identity: 13 females and 2 male members
- Race/ethnic identity: 8 Black/African Americans, 2 Hispanic/Latino and 5 White/Caucasian members
- Languages spoken: 2 Spanish (bilingual), 1 Arabic and Greek, 1 Haitian Creole, and 15 English
- Experience with OEC services: 4 Birth to Three, 8 with Child Care and 2 with Home Visiting
- Experiences with state services public benefits: 4 with WIC, 4 with SNAP and 4 with Care 4 Kids
- 11 out of the 15 members have a child aged 0 -5 years' old.

2022-February 2023 Impact

Since being fully onboarded in their role in January 2022, the Parent Cabinet members have spent most of the year getting acquainted in their role, building relationships with each other, OEC, and communities in their region.

They were able to provide OEC guidance and expertise to the agency on various issue areas that have led to improvements in OEC policies, procedures, and offerings. These include:

Child care hours and Fees – Feedback informed the Commissioner about needed hours and availability for state funded spaces. Members also provided input into proposed changes to the sliding fee scale.

2022 OEC Parent Survey co-design and outreach – The Parent Cabinet co-designed a statewide parent survey with the OEC to better understand parent needs, wants related to child care, employment, and mental health. This partnership led to the OEC receiving 2.5 times the number of responses compared to the last survey in 2020. The survey results will inform and help shape important policies for the OEC.

Formula shortage – When families were experiencing infant formula shortages, Parent Cabinet members provided real-time information to the OEC on what parents were experiencing, what they needed, where supplies were being found, etc. This helped shape communication with families.

OEC Strategic Planning – The Parent Cabinet is an active member of the OEC Strategic planning effort.

Early Childhood Cabinet – The OEC Parent Cabinet has a seat at the table and makes a direct connect between these two important advisory bodies.

Blue Ribbon Panel – A member of the Parent Cabinet will be a part of a newly established Blue-Ribbon Panel that will outline a data-driven 5-year vision for Connecticut that supports family needs, business needs, and prioritizes equitable access to early care and education.

State and National Leader - CT is a leader nationally in this work and is being called upon often to present and share our work with other states. Parent Cabinet members are taking an active and public role in supporting the agency's goal of increasing the voice of parents/families at local and state tables.

This includes the following:

- Speaking at agency and Governor press conferences when requested (2 this past year)
- Presenting at the CT Council on Women and Girls
- Presented at the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conference in Washington, D.C. in November, 2022; and the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) national convening in December, 2022
- Presented as part of a panel for the Georgia 2GEN statewide summit

Local to State Feedback Loop - The OEC Parent Cabinet connects with the local early childhood collaboratives and local Parent Ambassadors, as well as other parent groups to ensure that there is a local to state, and state to local feedback loop. This connect down to the local level and back up is critical for the OEC to understand what policy impacts are occurring and what the needs are at the ground level along with having a channel of communication for the OEC to share what is occurring at the state level.