



August 18, 2015

Dear Colleague:

The State Department of Education's Early Childhood Special Education Program (IDEA 619) in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood's Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP) is announcing the availability of funds to support eligible school districts and community programs in obtaining accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Funds are targeted to eligible school districts and community based programs (see page 3 of application) that deliver preschool special education services in settings that include an integrated preschool; public school preschool, including Family Resource Centers; School Readiness; Head Start; full- and/or part-day center-based preschool; early childhood programs and/or nursery schools. Eligible programs may utilize the application [to request funding support, including reimbursement, for NAEYC fees paid by the program between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015.](#) The application can be found on the Department of Education's website ([www.sde.ct.gov](http://www.sde.ct.gov)) under Special Education. In the section called Program Improvement, slick on Early Childhood Special Education and then click on NAEYC.

This application period represents the final opportunity for programs under this funding source as this project will conclude on September 30, 2015.

Please call or email Deb Flis, (860) 713-6982 or [Deb.Flis@ct.gov](mailto:Deb.Flis@ct.gov) with any questions regarding this opportunity.

*Maria Synodi*

*Deb Flis*

Maria Synodi, Coordinator  
Early Childhood Special Education  
State Department of Education

Deborah Flis  
Accreditation Facilitation Project  
Office of Early Childhood

## **Who is Eligible?**

Programs eligible for financial support include:

**Public schools providing special education and related services to children ages 3, 4 and 5 with disabilities.**

School districts are eligible if their classroom composition includes no less than 50% of typically developing children.

**Community programs working collaboratively with a school district to serve and support children ages 3, 4, and 5 with disabilities who are receiving special education and related services.**

Community early education programs are eligible if their program can demonstrate that they work collaboratively with the school district in serving and supporting the district's children, ages 3 through 5, with an Individualized Educational Program (IEP). Community programs must have a current collaborative relationship with a school district regarding services and supports to children with an IEP; and be able to document in a collaborative agreement that they have served and supported a child during the period of October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. Financial support is contingent upon the approval of the school district's administration that the program works collaboratively with the district on serving children, ages 3 through 5, under an IEP.

**Non-sectarian programs** as defined by the following guidelines:

1. The program must be open to all children, and cannot exclude a child based on the family's religious creed or lack thereof;
2. The program cannot attempt to persuade or convert children or their families to a religion or a particular religious persuasion;
3. The program will not implement religious observances, such as prayer, grace, confession, church attendance, religious instruction, etc.;
4. The program must accommodate the practice of a child or staff member's personal religious beliefs where the practice is required during program hours (e.g., Islamic designated time for prayers);
5. The program may not require enrolled children or their families to participate in faith-based or church sponsored activities or services;
6. Programs may not discriminate in hiring based on religious affiliation or lack of religious affiliation; and
7. Unless it is not practicable, classes should be conducted in rooms that are free of religious symbols and items.

Eligible providers may include faith-based organizations but services provided to children must be non-sectarian.

A Model Agreement illustrating the variety of ways that a community based program and a public school district might collaborate is available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320750#NAEYC>. Preference will be given to community based programs that have an interagency agreement with their school district.

## **What will the funding cover?**

Because SDE/ IDEA funds for this effort are being used to drive inclusive early childhood programs toward higher levels of program quality, the funds can be used to cover NAEYC accreditation and/or renewal fees as a program is moving forward in the NAEYC Accreditation process. These fees include: enrollment, application, onsite visit/candidacy, annual report, intent to renew, and renewal materials.

The funds may not be used to pay for verification visits, late fees or the accreditation maintenance fee for a program that has been enrolled in accreditation for longer than two years.

Applications submitted and approved between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015 will have their fees paid with the available IDEA 619 funds.

It is the expectation of SDE/IDEA that a program receiving these funds will complete the NAEYC process within a two year time period.

**ACCREDITATION FACILITATION PROJECT  
OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD 165 CAPITOL AVE., ROOM G35 HARTFORD, CT 06106  
Tel (800) 832-7784 • Fax (860) 713-6982 • E-mail: [Deb.Flis@ct.gov](mailto:Deb.Flis@ct.gov)**

## **How does a program access the funds?**

An application form for funding support in attaining NAEYC accreditation is available at [www.sde.ct.gov](http://www.sde.ct.gov). Click on Special Education. Then click on “Early Childhood Special Education” under the Program Improvement list. Then click on “NAEYC.”

Programs that have already paid fees during this fiscal year may apply for financial support and can be reimbursed for the fees paid to NAEYC. In order for a program to obtain reimbursement, documentation must be included with the application. Acceptable documentation includes:

- cancelled checks (copies of both sides), and/or
- bank statements showing the amount and payee, and /or
- the program’s financial record from the NAEYC website  
<http://www.naeyc.org/academy/primary/loginprogramrecord>.

### **Purchase orders are not accepted as documentation of payment.**

Please know that these funds are limited. Applications for eligible programs will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. Funding awards are made for specific fees and do not provide a blanket award for all NAEYC fees that a program may incur.

## **Who are the authorized signers of the application?**

The application for funding must be signed by an administrator from a public school system (Superintendent or Director of Special Education/ Pupil Services).

## **How do I learn more about the NAEYC Accreditation process?**

There are several important sources for information on NAEYC Accreditation:

[www.naeyc.org/academy](http://www.naeyc.org/academy)

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

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