

Employer Childcare & Early Childhood Education Toolkit



HELPING EMPLOYEES

Survey employees about their work-family needs. Use this [Washington State survey](#) for some useful ideas.

Provide employees with useful and readily available child care information directly or through an Employee Assistance Program, such as:

- Connecticut's [2-1-1 Child Care's online search tool](#)
- [Home Visiting](#) opportunities (help with new parenting, postpartum depression, difficult behavior, and other challenges)
- [Birth to Three](#) services for children with developmental delays
- Local and regional organizations, including [Staffed Family Child Care Networks](#) and [Early Childhood and School Readiness Councils](#)
- The federal government's [Child Care Resources Handbook](#)
- Benefits of quality child care programs, the role of men in child care, positive parenting, stimulating one's child, and good nutrition.

Educate employees about their tax, subsidy, and discount eligibilities.

Federal tax credits include the [Child Tax Credit](#), the [Child and Dependent Care Credit](#), and the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#). Connecticut has a variety of subsidies for eligible families—visit the [Connecticut Office of Early Childhood](#) on available forms of assistance. Employers can also alert employees to the sliding fee scales, scholarships, and sibling discounts offered by local early childhood care providers.

Arrange for employee discounts at child care center chains. Or pay part of an employee's child care expenses with such chains, or another provider, through a DCAP, a cafeteria benefits plan, or as a separate benefit to attract, reward, and retain young employees. Paying through a DCAP saves employers from paying employment taxes on this amount. Beyond the \$5,000 DCAP limit, some employers provide child care scholarships to lower-paid employees.

Provide emergency backup care options for when employees' care arrangements fall through, including on-site, near-site, or community-based services (including reserved, prepaid spaces), as well as an in-home option through a local third-party company or a digital platform such as Care.com's [Care@Work program](#).

Provide paid parental leave and flexible scheduling to allow for the scheduling of child care. Find best practices from the Human Capital Institute's [A 360 View of Family Leave](#).

Offer a Dependent Care Assistance Plan (DCAP) aka Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (FSA), allowing employees and/or their employers to contribute up to \$5,000 in pretax dollars to spend on early childhood care and education. About half of all employers offer this plan and the cost of a basic plan is affordable. View [Connecticut's Dependent Care Assistance Plan](#) and the Connecticut program's [Fact Sheet](#) for more information.

Start an Employee Resource Group on early childhood care, education, and work-family issues, giving employees mutual support and providing your company with feedback on their needs.

Set up an on-site or nearby child care center. Visit [KinderCare](#) and [Bright Horizons](#) for more information. For detailed information on setting up a child care center, see the Appendix to this 2019 [Guide for Employer-Supported Childcare](#).

HELPING IN THE COMMUNITY

Provide financial support, technical assistance, or mentoring to other local early childhood programs and networks, including the new [Staffed Family Child Care Networks](#), organizations such as [Child First](#) and [Birth to Three](#) that provide wraparound service programs (such as home visiting), and [Cradle to Career programs](#) in four Connecticut cities, Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stamford, and Waterbury. The range of programs in a community can be seen in this [Early Childhood Resource Directory](#) from the region that includes Middletown, Norwich, and Willimantic. Community foundations and United Ways can also point out local programs.

- Support local child care providers with business coaching, scholarships for further education, small grants for needed improvements, and time, space, supplies, and classroom materials.
- Support development of and improvements and access to [CTShares.org](#), Connecticut's new Shared Services Platform, giving child care providers access to policies, regulations, forms, handbooks, professional development, and discounts on business purchases. Support may consist of help with back office functions such as IT, HR, billing, and accounting, as well as joint purchasing, marketing and enrollment, program coordination, facilities management, and business training.

Join and support the local or regional Early Childhood Council or School Readiness Council (see the [list of Councils on the Connecticut Children's Collective website](#)). The Office of Early Childhood encourages local business owners to participate.

Open the company's on-site or near-site child care center to the community, especially those without the resources to access quality child care.

Raise awareness through op-eds, social media posts, letters to the editor, etc. For data and information on early care in Connecticut, see [Connecticut Voices for Children 2020 Briefing](#) and the [Hunt Institute's report on Early Childhood Development and the State Systems that Support It](#).

WORKING WITH OTHER BUSINESSES AT THE STATE LEVEL

For more information, as well as case studies, see the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's [Leading the Way: A Guide for Business Engagement in Early Education \(2018\)](#).

Educate other business leaders and share best practices by sponsoring early childhood speakers at business associations, development councils, community organizations, etc. Find relevant speakers through ReadyNation, a national business coalition with a focus on early childhood (contact the Council for a Strong America's [Jeffrey Connor-Naylor](#)).

Jointly fundraise by creating grants, initiating fundraising campaigns, guaranteeing loans, or forming a foundation to raise money to invest in early childhood care and education.

Research or support research of community needs, as well as models and best practices. This is often done through a statewide task force or blue ribbon commission on early childhood care and education that provides recommendations. A commission in Vermont led to the establishment of the [Let's Grow Kids](#) campaign, which provides technical assistance and leadership to the expansion of early childhood programs, provides businesses with assessments of their employees' needs and how best to satisfy them, while providing public relations to let other companies and the public know about the results.

Advocate alone, through a business association or with a child-focused organization, or help convene a new coalition to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood care and education as both an economic engine and an equity issue, mobilizing members to influence government at all levels.

Help establish a statewide coalition of businesses or a public-private coalition to provide the kinds of support and assistance listed in the previous section.

For more best practices or information, please contact [Skye Cornell \(skye@svp-ct.org\)](mailto:skye@svp-ct.org) of [Social Venture Partners Connecticut](#).