

## Current UPK System Outline

(created by CDD in April 2024 with input from AOE and a Regional UPK coordinator for the Systems-Level Considerations Workgroup of the Prekindergarten Education implementation Committee)

### **Jointly established and overseen by AOE Early Education and AHS DCF Child Development Division:**

- Recommend rules for UPK to the State Board of Education
- Develop a UPK monitoring system
- Implement a UPK monitoring (more detailed breakdown of AOE and CDD below)
  - o Uptake and impact of UPK overall
  - o Accountability and Continuous Improvement System (ACIS)
    - Prequalification
    - Annual assurances
    - Compliance monitoring
- Develop and support adoption of the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS), approved by the Vermont State Board of Education in 2016
- Support quality through professional development and training

### **State Board of Education**

- Approved rules governing Prekindergarten Education - [State Board Rules Series 2600 \(vermont.gov\)](https://www.vermont.gov/doc/education/state-board-rules-series-2600), last amended in 2016

### **Child Development Division:**

- License and monitor all programs through Child Care Licensing (foundational health, safety, and quality standards)
  - o Applicable to all settings including public schools
  - o Includes fingerprint-supported background checks and staff credential review
  - o Includes unannounced visits and robust violation/corrective action process
- Develop and implement STARS quality recognition and Improvement system (enhanced quality standards)
  - o UPK programs required to have 4 or 5 STARS (NAEYC accreditation or Head Start programs = 5 STARS) or 3 STARS with an accepted CQI plan of moving to 4 STARS
  - o Includes an externally-scored CLASS assessment at 4 and 5 star levels
  - o Focus on continuous quality improvement with coaches available
- Monitor UPK system as a whole and for individual programs
  - o Develop, refine, and implement UPK monitoring system in partnership with AOE
  - o Analysis of CDD-held data for UPK partners
  - o Support prequalification process for STARS and Licensing
  - o Partner with AOE on case-by-base program compliance – concerns, complaints, licensing violations
- Support Quality
  - o Partner with AOE on eMTSS training/coaching
  - o Partner with AOE on VELs development and promotion, embed into CDD-led programs, trainings and supports
  - o Support Professional Development
    - Free or low-cost trainings through CCV
    - Funding for educators working increase credentials (for those not yet holding AOE teacher license, including those working in community-based child care as well as paraeducators in public schools)
- Support transition from IDEA Part C (for children under 3, overseen by CDD through CIS) to IDEA Part B (for children 3 and over, overseen by AOE through SUs/SDs)

## Agency of Education

- Coordinate UPK Prequalification and Annual Assurances
  - o Review applications for UPK from community-based child care programs (initial application plus reapplication every 3 years)
  - o Collect and review (desk monitoring) of Annual Assurance Forms from all prequalified UPK programs that they are/will meet program standards related to educational elements
    - Child Care License
    - STARS
    - AOE Licensed Teacher (diff standards by setting)
    - Vermont Early Learning Standards
    - Teaching Strategies GOLD (2x/year)
    - IDEA and ECSE
    - 10 hours/week for 35 weeks during school year
    - Meet with parents 2x year, provide assessments
    - Follow all applicable federal and state laws, including those related to nondiscrimination and inclusion
    - Must allow on-site visit from CDD, AOE, and SD/SU
    - Must participate in Accountability and Continuous Improvement System
  
- Monitor UPK compliance by individual programs
  - o Monitor program change reports and other sources of concerns
  - o Address compliance issues (without CDD) related to AOE Licensed Educators
  - o Track reports, investigate concerns, and problem-solve related Exclusionary Discipline and/or Early Childhood Special Education (sometimes with CDD)
  - o Partner with CDD on case-by-case programs compliance on concerns related to or reported via Child Care Licensing
  - o Initiative revocation when necessary
  
- Monitor UPK system as a whole
  - o Develop, refine, and implement UPK monitoring system in partnership with CDD
  - o Analysis of AOE-held data for UPK programs
  - o Kindergarten Readiness (RFK!S) report
  
- Set and publish state UPK Tuition Rate annually
  - o Update based on index in PreK Rules
  
- Lead IDEA Part B Section 619 – Early Childhood Special Education and Services
  - o Oversee implementation and monitor compliance with IDEA (FAPE, Child Find, IEPs, Least Restrictive Environments, data collection, reporting, etc)
  - o Trainings and support for ECSE
  - o TA re: ECSE compliance/practices
  - o Partner with CDD Children’s Integrated Services of IDEA Part C (for children 0-3)
  
- Support Teaching Strategies GOLD administration
  - o Manage state GOLD account including access for programs
  - o Ensure programs complete GOLD checkpoints 2x/year
  - o Provide TA to programs
  
- Teacher Licensure
  - o Work with Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators on rules and regulations for licensed Vermont educators with ECE/ECSE endorsements

- Support educators in private settings with Provisional AOE Teaching Licenses with ECE/ECSE endorsements
- Support Quality Implementation
  - Facilitate eMTSS training/coaching for PreK programs, in coordination with CDD
  - Develop and promote VELs in partnership with CDD, embed into AOE-led programs, trainings and supports
  - Provide TA and resources to UPK programs on inclusion, challenging behaviors
  - Support coordination of universal screenings and assessment – Ages and Stages screener (ASQ), Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT), etc.
- Lead for communications related to UPK
  - Share programmatic updates/deadlines
  - Share evidence-based resources and other professional resources through list-serve

### **SDs/SUs**

- Financial and Contracts:
  - Enter into a partnership agreement (also referred to as contract) with UPK partner, includes attendance and how tuition payments will be paid
  - Report ADM, including prekindergarten students, to Agency of Education
  - Specify the identifiable costs for prekindergarten education and ECSE services in their annual budgets and in their annual reports to the community
  - Pay tuition to the UPK partner programs on behalf of enrolled children
- Registrations/Enrollment:
  - Establish enrollment procedures for prekindergarten children
  - Notify parents and guardians of availability of publicly-funded prekindergarten education and the enrollment procedures
  - Report student enrollment and other student data in the Agency’s VT Student Census platform for each child enrolled
- Special Education:
  - Ensure Early Childhood Special Education Services are offered/delivered per IDEA Part B in manner that works for the child/family (but not required to offer them onsite at UPK partner programs)
- Professional Development:
  - Provide support/professional development to staff in public school PreK programs
  - (Optional) Provide support/professional development to staff in community-based PreK programs

### **Building Bright Futures:**

- Overall role in statute is to convene, advise, and monitor Early Childhood systems overall – which includes PreK – and any programs/policies relevant to children under 8
- Named in Act 166 as partner to state in developing plans to allow SDs to establish “PreK regions” (only one area of state has done this)
- Named in UPK Rules (Series 2600) as a key partner in developing regional plans to expand capacity for PreK if demand exceeds capacity in a region
- Often called upon to convene or contract for neutral, external, research-based projects; for UPK-related topics have included:
  - Prekindergarten Landscape Analysis
  - Guidance related to Suspension and Expulsion

- Early Childhood Systems Analysis

**Resources:**

[CDD licensing Regulations](#)

[AOE prequalification checklist](#)

[UPK 101 Webinar - AOE for prequalified programs or those interested in becoming prequalified](#)

[UPK Coordinator handbook -AOE 12/23](#)

[Vermont Early Learning Standards](#)

[Building Bright Futures' role as Vermont's Early Childhood State Advisory Council](#)