

# **East Hartford School Readiness Council**

## **Policies and Guidelines**

### **Non-Sectarian Policy**

#### **Reference (C-05/GP 09-01)**

Under CT General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10-16p(a)(1), a School Readiness program must be a “nonsectarian program” which is defined in section 10-16p(f) as “any public or private School Readiness program that is not violative of the Establishment Clause of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut or the Establishment Clause of the Constitution of the United States of America.” The purpose of this GENERAL POLICY is to provide guidance to School Readiness Councils (SRCs), School Readiness Liaisons and School Readiness Programs on the characteristics of a nonsectarian program. The guidance was developed by the Office of Legal and Governmental Affairs and has been reviewed by the Attorney General’s Office of Connecticut.

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

\*If state funds are being used to purchase spaces for eligible children in a School Readiness program operated by faith-based organizations, these programs must be nonsectarian (non-religious) in order not to run afoul of requirements of the Establishment Clause. It is not enough to allow students and/or their families to “opt out” of portions of the program which are religious in nature. To be eligible for funding, sub-grantees must comply with these requirements.