

NASCIO Awards Submission

State of Connecticut: Office of Early Childhood (OEC),
Department of Administrative Services - Bureau of
Information Technology Solutions (BITS)



Transforming Childcare Oversight: Electronic Childcare Inspections

2025



Category: Operational Efficiency

Project Dates: Launched Dec 2023; Next Milestone:
Youth Camps go-live Summer 2025

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Executive Summary

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC), in collaboration with the Bureau of Information Technology Solutions (BITS), launched a statewide transition to Electronic Childcare Inspections, revolutionizing how over 4,000 childcare facilities are monitored for health and safety compliance. The initiative replaces cumbersome paper-based inspections with a mobile digital platform, accelerating the inspection process, ensuring clarity and consistency in reporting, and significantly enhancing communication between the state, providers, and families. With mobile devices, digital signatures, and real-time report sharing, OEC has transformed a traditionally burdensome and inconsistent system into a model of transparency and efficiency.

Idea

Prior to 2024, OEC inspectors performed childcare inspections using printed forms and manual data entry—an outdated method prone to inconsistency, inefficiency, delays, subjectivity, and communication barriers. Reports were handwritten, scanned, and uploaded days after inspections, often containing unclear or inconsistent terminology, leaving facilities confused about compliance expectations. Inspectors often carried heavy paper binders, wasting time and resources.

Inspections are critical to ensuring children’s health and safety in early education environments. Delays or confusion in the reporting process could jeopardize compliance and reduce families’ confidence in childcare services. A modernized, clear, and consistent inspection process ensures faster corrections, regulatory compliance, and better-informed families.

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What Makes it Different?

Connecticut's project replaced all paper forms with iPad-based digital inspections that use templated dropdown language, ensuring standardized violation reporting across all inspectors. This approach eliminates issues of legibility and inconsistency while improving accuracy and clarity. Digital reports are instantly shared with providers and include direct links to online Corrective Action Plans (CAPs). Additionally, reports are automatically published to a consumer-friendly website, often within 24 hours, far exceeding federal timeliness expectations.

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What Makes it Universal?

Every state regulates licensed childcare programs and must meet similar federal mandates for inspection frequency and transparency. The Connecticut model directly supports two top CIO priorities:

1. **Digital Government/Digital Services:** elevates user experience through seamless digital workflows.
2. **Customer Relationship Management:** enhances trust through immediate feedback, standard language, and public accessibility.

This mobile inspection model can be easily adapted by any state with similar licensing structures and integration needs or by another CT agency that uses the state's e-licensing system looking to offer mobile inspections.

Implementation

In December 2023, OEC deployed iPads equipped with a custom mobile inspection platform integrated with the state's e-licensing system. Inspectors log in to a secure mobile application on the iPad. The app syncs with a central database to retrieve up-to-date information about the facility being inspected. Inspectors can review past violations and CAPs to tailor the visit accordingly. The inspection tool is organized into paginated digital sections, aligned with regulatory categories. Each page prompts the inspector with dropdown menus, checkboxes, and standardized text options to guide consistent documentation of findings. Templated language ensures that all inspectors use uniform terminology to describe observations and violations. The interface may include photo capture, or direct entry fields to enhance documentation quality.

The pilot included:

- Licensed Childcare Centers
- Family Home Childcare
- Group Childcare Homes

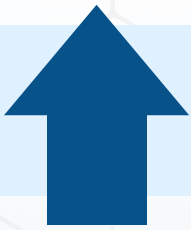
Facilities sign inspection reports electronically on-site, triggering an instant email with the report and CAP link. BITS oversaw device procurement, system integration, and design alignment with the existing licensing system. **The collaboration emphasized human-centered design and iterative problem-solving, especially around platform interoperability and inspector workflows.**

In October 2024, legally license-exempt programs were integrated into the new system, and Youth Camps are planned for integration in summer 2025.



Impact

The transition to iPad-based digital inspections has significantly improved the efficiency, clarity, and transparency of Connecticut's childcare licensing process. Inspectors can now complete more visits per day. A process that previously spanned two days can now be completed in one. Inspectors no longer need to return to the office to upload notes or scan reports. Facilities respond faster to corrective actions with fewer errors and delays.



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Reports are published publicly, allowing parents to easily understand safety findings. Facilities also post clearer versions onsite, improving trust and communication with families.

Inspectors, such as Kristi Morgan, reported they can now conduct “a couple of inspections in a day” that used to take several days. This allows more efficient coverage across programs and reduces disruption for small centers.

How Do You Know?

- Feedback from Licensing Managers confirms faster report turnaround and more consistent documentation.
- Inspector satisfaction has increased, with improved usability and streamlined workflows.
- Parents and families now access reports online in plain language, promoting safety and trust.
- Help Desk support inquiries have decreased, as facilities receive clear guidance through online CAPs and standardized language.

Was it Better?

- **Faster Inspection Cycles:** Inspectors conduct more site visits in less time.
- **Standardized Language:** Dropdown menus reduce errors and improve communication.
- **Digital CAPs:** No more uploading scanned forms; providers respond online immediately.
- **Public Reporting:** Next-day website updates increase transparency and meet federal requirements efficiently.

Long-term Plan

Connecticut is committed to refining and expanding the system. Future milestones include:

- Youth Camps integration (Summer 2025)
- Broader use across license-exempt programs
- Enhanced analytics for performance tracking
- Deeper integration with family engagement platforms

Return on Investment

By eliminating redundant administrative tasks and accelerating compliance reporting, OEC and BITS have reduced time-to-resolution, improved family confidence, and supported a more responsive childcare system. The streamlined digital process has enabled OEC to not only catch up on previously backlogged inspections but also allowed the agency to stay ahead of regulatory requirements for timely inspections. The initial investment in technology is yielding high returns through workforce efficiency and improved public service outcomes.

“It’s so much easier to perform inspections, and providers are responding faster. That’s more time back to serve families.” – Kristi Morgan, Childcare Licensing Specialist