

March 5, 2020

Dear Early Childhood Professional and Colleague,

On September 25, 2019 the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) adopted a [new rule](#) mandating all child care staff, volunteers, and adult household members comply with the new comprehensive background check process. This rule extends to all licensed, registered, permitted, or legally exempt childcare programs. Enhanced background checks can contribute to a safer child care environment for young children. However, the mandate poses a challenge for student interns in early childhood teacher education programs as they are neither an employee, staff member, volunteer, or adult household member.

Members of the early childhood teacher education community contacted OCFS to gain clarity on the appropriate role for student interns. Representatives from OCFS confirmed that **student interns are to be considered “visitors” within any building they are placed, and, therefore, do not fall under the definition of who must be cleared per the new mandate.** Knowing that safety is a primary concern we share with you, student interns must document their presence (i.e., visitor log) each and every time they enter and exit any child care, day care, or Head Start facility. In addition, as a visitor, the student intern may not be counted in ratio, and should never be left unsupervised or alone with children. In the instance the student intern becomes employed at the site (now or in the future), they would no longer be considered a visitor and would need to complete the full clearance process per the mandate.

It is our goal to provide some clarity to you, as well as confidence, that by accepting student interns, you will not place your child care setting at risk for non-compliance. We truly recognize that safety, confidentiality, and professionalism is of the highest priority. While student interns can be designated as “visitors” when completing placements, please know we respect your right to require program-specific paperwork to comply with your program’s policies.

We greatly appreciate your willingness to open your center doors and welcome the next generation of teachers. Should you have any questions about the content of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Galbraith